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THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVES ON BLACK MALES AT ST. PHILIP'S COLLEGE: AN EVALUATION OF RETENTION, COMPLETION, AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

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THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVES ON BLACK MALES AT ST. PHILIP'S COLLEGE: AN EVALUATION OF RETENTION, COMPLETION, AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Sandy John and Vivian Louise Hancock, who raised me to believe in fairness, fortitude, a love of life, and an appreciation of people and their differences, and most important, be the best you can be. Damian, Kisha, and Marcus, one day you will believe that all things are possible. Believe in thyself if no other will. Dad will forever love each of you.

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Black males continue to struggle when faced with the challenge of seeking a college education (Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Mincy, et al 2006; Schott, 2006). Currently, they lag behind in college and university participation as compared to other gendered groups as well as their White and Asian counterparts (Cuyjet, 2006; Bush & Bush, 2010). As with every promising Black male community college student, there are barriers to enrollment and completion, e.g., first-generation and first-time-in-college, previous high school academic and disciplinary experiences, peer pressure, family dynamics, financial considerations and social environments serving as barriers to enrollment and completion. Despite these barriers, many Black males students make it to college. However, they often have difficulty remaining in the educational system long enough to complete their

certificates and/or degrees. Although, there are many quality community college and university programs designed to increase the overall success of students “prior to” and “during” enrollment, regrettably, many colleges that facilitate outreach and retention efforts do little by way of accountability. Statistical monitoring for evaluation purpose is mixed. Adequate records of how Black males are performing in and apart from college are important for educational institutions as they consider developing specialized programs for minority sub-group participation, engagement, and success. Furthermore, unengaged Black males, and those attempting to aid them, have varying viewpoints as to the type and priority of programs designed to include Black male participation in postsecondary education. This study will examine Black males’ perspectives versus institutional engagement strategies relative to participation, engagement, and successes that influence Black males Men on the Move program at St. Philip’s College. Moreover, the study will furthermore investigate outreach and retention efforts for Black males that were developed by the St. Philip’s College.

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"Without education, there is no hope for our people and without hope, our future is lost." Charles Hamilton Houston

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Community and technical colleges play a vital role in education and training in the United States. They have demonstrated their ability to provide a solid education at a good value, and function as an essential engine in the area of workforce development for local communities. The economy of the twenty-first century requires a skilled workforce and development of rigorous, education and training for all those who seek economic independence. The federal government, specifically President Barack Obama, has responded by putting education at the forefront of his domestic priorities, and has actively pursued ways to work with postsecondary educators to strengthen the key role that community colleges can and must play in the educating American's workforce and its youth. Jobs requiring at least an associate's degree are projected to grow as fast as those requiring no college experience and advanced skills will be required if America is to compete globally.

The Obama administration's *American Graduation Initiative* announced in 2009 that they would begin to fund initiatives that would produce 5 million more community college graduates by 2020 for the purpose of raising graduation rates, tying courses to business needs, improve remedial education, and strengthen transitions with high schools and four-year colleges (The White House, 2009, para. 14). Initiatives such as this are critical to strengthening U.S economic security and securing the economic independence of the young as well as the lower-and middle-class population.

However, the U.S. suffers from a disparity in educational opportunities. Although education is the largest human capital investment in the early part of the young person's life, the vast majority of young people in the United States today do not have at least a high school education. A report from Center for America's Progress noted, "America suffers from a profound disparity of educational opportunity" and the academic gaps represent a fundamental failure that promises to ensure that every child has an opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential (Center for American Progress, 2007, p. 22). These gaps stifle economic growth and endanger America's way of life.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, more students were likely to graduate high school than the preceding one. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 82% of all students between the ages of 18-24 possessed a high school credential (United States Census Bureau [USCB], n.d., table A-5). This upward trend in secondary education increased worker productivity and fueled American economic growth (Goldin & Katz, 2003). However, in the past 25 years, the gaps in wage disparity between high school graduates and dropouts increased the economic incentives to graduate high school.

The real wages of high school dropouts have declined since the early 1970s while those of more skilled workers have risen sharply (Autor, Katz, & Kearney, 2005). How much is higher education worth in cold hard cash? On average, a college master's degree is worth $1.3 million more in lifetime earnings than a high school diploma, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. According to Cheeseman-Day & Newburger (2002) over an adult's working life, high school graduates can expect on average to earn $1.2 million, than those with a bachelor's degree, $2.1 million; and people with a master's degree, earn $2.5 million over their working lifetime (p. 4). The U.S. Census estimated that high

school dropouts earn $270,000 less than high school graduates do over their working lives (Cheeseman-Day & Newburger, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, one can equate education with higher earnings, and can conclude that the payoff is most prominent at the highest-degreed levels. However, Blacks earned less than White non-Hispanics at almost every education level. Bauman & Ryan (2001) concluded, "Blacks[1] earned 77% less than their White non-Hispanic counterparts, and Hispanic education levels were equal to White non-Hispanic levels, earning 59%, less than Hispanics" (p. 6). Conversely, 16- to 24-year-old men and women by educational attainment reveal that high school dropouts have the greatest variation in employment (Rodgers, III, 2006, p. 44).

Our nation's lower economic mobility is at least partially attributable to social and economic policies as well as educational disparities. Too often, the poorest children in the United States are the least educated. Education provides those who are entering the workforce with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

[1] It is important to distinguish between the terms "black" and "African American." To some, "African Americans" are a subgroup within a larger black community that includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who do not identify as African American. While the term is used interchangeable, to remain consistent with terminology. The term "black" will be employed through the dissertation.

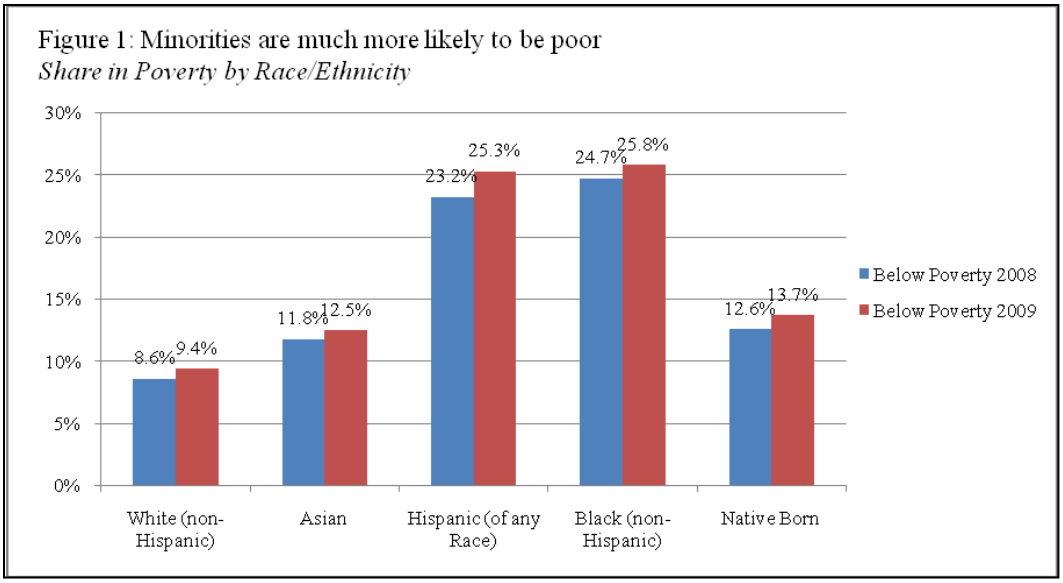

Figure 1 People and Families in Poverty by Selected Characteristics: Graphic shows that the majority of minorities are much more likely to be poor (25.8% African American; 25.3% Hispanic of any race). Data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2009 Annual Social, and Economic Supplement: 2008–2009.

Figure 1 shows the poverty rate for 2008 compared to 2009 and point to a increase for non-Hispanic Whites (from 8.6 % to 9.4 %), for Blacks (from 24.7% to 25.8%), and for Hispanics (from 23.2 % to 25.3 %). For Asians, the 2009 poverty rate (12.5 %) was not statistically different from the 2008 poverty rate (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010, table 4).[2] Haskins, Holzer, & Lerman (2009) conclude that children from families in the bottom income quintile have only a 34% chance of enrolling in college as compared with an enrollment rate of nearly 80% among children in the top quintile (p.12). If the enrollment rates portray a picture of disadvantage for students from

[2] Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Figure 1 shows data using the first approach (race alone). The use of the single-race population does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. About 2.6 percent of people reported more than one race in Census 2000. Data for American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, and those reporting two or more races are not shown separately.

poor and low-income families, the degree completion rates are even worse. Children from the bottom quintile are only 20% as likely to earn a college degree as children from the top quintile (Haskin et al., 2009). The gap between rich and poor has never been greater. The United States has the greatest income disparity gap of any industrialized nation in the world. Federal Reserve chairperson Ben Bernanke concluded that it is based on educational differences. Bernanke concluded that the unemployment rate if you have a college degree is 5% and if you are a high school graduate, it is 10% or more.

Mincy, Lewis, Jr., & Han, (2006) concluded that the disparity in education is relevant as less-educated non-enrolled young Black men experience the poorest outcomes, with 82.9% earning no more than the medium hourly wage for all male workers between 16 and 24 years (p. 4). Mincy et al., (2006) found that nearly half, 46.2%, of less-educated non-enrolled young Black men reported no earnings in 2001, and that Hispanics fared better, with 73.3% earning wages below the midpoint for all workers and among less educated White male workers, and 62.6% hourly earnings at the medium or below the poverty level. The Center for American Progress (2007) concluded that children from families in the bottom income quintile have only a 34% chance of enrolling in college as compared with an enrollment rate of nearly 80% among children in the top quintile (p 12). Moreover, if the enrollment rates portray a picture of disadvantage for students from poor and low-income families, the degree completion rates are even worse. Children from the bottom quintile are only 20% as likely to earn a college degree as children from the top quintile (p.13).

Furthermore, The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2005) concluded that half of the nation's African American and Latino students are dropping out of high

school. The most severe problems are in segregated high-poverty schools.[3] Children in high-poverty schools are marked by students who have less motivation and are often subject to negative peer influences; parents who are generally less active, exert less clout in school affairs, and garner fewer financial resources for the school; and teachers who tend to be less qualified, to have lower expectations, and to teach watered-down curriculum. Giving all students access to schools with a core of middle-class students and parents will significantly raise the overall quality of schooling in America (Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 47). African American and Latino students attend not only higher-poverty schools than whites on average, but in many metropolitan areas very little overlap exists between the schools these different groups attend. For example, 43% of white students attend schools with poverty rates of 20% or less, compared to just 7% of African American and Hispanic students. In contrast, 43% of African American and Hispanic students attend schools with poverty rates over 80%, compared to 4% of whites (McArdle, Osypuk, & Acevedo-García, 2010, p. 1).

For the high school class of 2002, almost a third of the high schools that were greater than 50% minority graduated less than half of their class and among schools that were 90% or more White, only one school in fifty had this kind of record. Half of the majority-minority schools had dropout rates over 40%, as did two-thirds of the schools with less than a tenth White students (The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2005). Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson (2004) concluded in 2001, nationally, 68% of all students who enter 9th grade graduated, while only 50% of all African American

[3] schools with high proportions of students in poverty

students—graduated from high school, compared with 51% of Native American students, 53% of all Hispanic students, and 75% of Whites. African American, Native American, and Hispanic males fared even worse: 43%, 47%, and 48% respectively, while White males graduated at 71%. Higher educational attainment is associated with higher earnings, and earnings differences have grown over time among workers with different levels of educational attainment. In 2008, higher earnings and lower unemployment rates were associated with higher educational attainment among persons 25 and older (Fernandes & Gabe, 2009, p. 23).

While greater academic success for students of color is crucial, it is only part of the equation. Ensuring African American males and other minority and gendered groups' graduate from high school and are college-ready should be the ultimate goal. The difference in earning power over the person's lifetime is considerable when one factor in a those who have a college degree and those who do not. Haskins, Holzer, & Lerman (2009) purports that "every poor and low-income child who achieves a two-year degree or four-year college degree can dramatically increase her chances of moving into the middle class" (p. 10). Fernandes et al., (2009) concluded that poverty status appears to be strongly correlated with educational attainment given that higher rates of educational attainment are associated with greater job attachment and higher wages (p.25), as well as being educated in less isolated, more diverse environments is a benefit both to students and to the community.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout history, the U.S. has created opportunities for those who searched for it. People have dreamt of economic independence, a safe place to live and raise a family, and sought the American Dream. However, for some, a dream deferred is a dream lost. Individuals living in poverty often face the toughest challenge when it comes to lifting themselves out of poverty and hardships because many African American males are not able to access the education that helps them make good life decisions (Hall, 2009, p. 43).

> Education serves as a powerful tool for moving nations, communities, households, and individuals towards a sustainable economic and independent future. Without education, "we cannot cure diseases, advance technology, enhance communication, make transportation safer, strengthen our economy, appreciate beauty, understand our past, make sense of our emotions, or promulgate justice. Without education the world remains mysterious and unintelligible, and we live in darkness and fear" (Shalala, 2008, p. 31).

African American males find it especially difficult to make the transition to and through postsecondary education. African American males face a whole host of social, cultural, economic, institutional, and political barriers and many fail as they attempt to achieve academically. Individual barriers most often include lack of a high school or General Educational Development (GED) diploma, inadequate academic preparation, the inability to successfully balance college studies with work and family responsibilities, and the lack of knowledge of helpful resources, such as childcare and financial assistance (U.S. Department of Education 2002; Kelly 2005; U.S. Department of Education 2006; Matus-Grossman et al., 2002).

All too often, cultural barriers exist because middle-class White educators have difficulties relating to men of color and in many ways, their lack of understanding limits their [White educators] ability to effectively engage and contribute to the success of African American males (Noguera, 2008, p. 308). For those African American male students who come from a high school background in which academic success was devalued, the problem of devoting adequate time to studies is exacerbated (Cuyjet, 2006, p. 18). Consequently, large percentages of African American male students fail and drop out of school and in some cases; African American students face a multitude of institutional barriers. Such as inconvenient course schedules, instruction and curricula not suited for adult learners, lack of support and counseling services, and low persistence rates in remedial education, where most African American males are initially placed when they first enter postsecondary education (Bailey, Jeong, and Cho 2008; Bosworth et al., 2007; Calcagno and Long 2008; Pusser et al., 2007). A half century after the U.S. Supreme Court found that segregated schools were inherently unequal, and evidence suggested that the nation's public schools were becoming more segregated and that academic achievement were becoming more unequal. Orfield and Lee (2004) concluded that for more than a decade, the nation had headed backward toward greater segregation for African American students. The patterns extended to the nation's suburbs, and the massive migration of African American and Latino families to the nation's suburbs produced hundreds of newly segregated and unequal schools and frustrating the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to create desegregated schools and equality of educational opportunity. The emphasis on choice undermined rather than fostered the

promise of *Brown*. Orfield et al., (2004) concluded, "Charter schools and private schools were more segregated than public schools" (p. 4).

What is more troubling is the growing tendency among some scholars and pundits to blame the persistence of unequal educational performance on the culture of Africans. To support various policies of inclusion and rehabilitation, and to counter theories of scientific racism, many invoked the idea that African Americans had been psychologically damaged by the experience of slavery and segregation (Anderson, 2004, p. 360). These policies and laws have historically limited inclusion, and access, oftentimes-limited student's financial aid, and funding formulas that promoted enrollment rather than course completion. In addition, there is a lack of alignment among various levels of the education and workforce systems, which might results in gaps in a student's educational path (Jenkins 2008; Mazzeo et al., (2006); McSwain & Davis 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2008). Lest we forget federal policies that preclude an individual from receiving financial aid if the student have been convicted of a felony, in some cases. Those who have been convicted of felonies and have spent time in prison often question their future. In today's world, a future of success usually requires a college education, but education requires money. Scholarships and student loans are available for most individuals looking for a college degree, but past record may preclude an individual from receiving financial assistance.

In nearly every case, those with drug convictions are not eligible for government assistance and some loans. Most felonies do not hinder students from acquiring education, but sometimes felonies in a related field can cause problems for an individual. The provisions, which were enforced for the first time during the 2000-2001 school

years, prohibit students who have been convicted of the sale or possession of a controlled substance from receiving federal financial aid for one year from the date of their conviction. That aid includes Pell Grants and all federally backed student loans. Students with multiple convictions are barred from receiving aid until they complete a federally approved drug-rehabilitation program.

Federal Student Aid (FSA) asks applicants whether they have ever been convicted of the sale or possession of a controlled substance. Students who answer yes or leave the question blank are directed to a worksheet, which weighs the date and number of the offenses to determine whether a student is now eligible for aid. The provisions were added to the Higher Education Act in 1998 to deny federal student aid for one year to applicants who had been convicted of possessing a controlled substance, two years for those convicted twice and permanently for those convicted three times. In early 2006 the laws were scaled back, to be limited to offenses committed while a student is enrolled in college and receiving federal Title IV aid.[4] Chart 1 illustrates the period of ineligibility for FSA funds, depending on whether the conviction was for sale or possession and whether the student had previous offenses. A conviction for sale of drugs includes convictions for conspiring to sell drugs (1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965, 1998).

[4] 1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 as amended (PL 105-244, Title IV, Part G, Section 483(f), Suspension of Eligibility for Drug Related Offenses), which amends Title 20 of the U. S. Code, Section 1091(a), regarding how the U. S. Department of Education administers grant programs for higher education

Table 1 Federal Aid Penalties for Drug Law Violations

Possession of illegal drugs	Sale of illegal drugs	Penalty
1st offense	1 year from date of conviction	2 years from date of conviction
2nd offense	2 years from date of conviction	Indefinite period
3+ offenses	Indefinite period	

Note. A third conviction carries an indefinite suspension from a student receiving Federal Student Financial Source: U.S. Department of Education Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

According to Inside Higher Ed (2006) critics of a law that bars the awarding of federal student financial aid to students convicted of drug offenses have offered up no shortage of reasons why they think the law is unnecessary, unfair and even unconscionable (Lederman, 2006, para. 1). The drug-free provisions constitute a form of double jeopardy that affects lower- and middle-income students, many of whom are African American or Hispanic. The law has led to the withdrawal from school of thousands of college students who have no alternative means of paying for their education, and for thousands of prisoners and college students; these laws have meant the end of the college dream.

According to the Drug Policy Alliance (2003) 48,629 students were formally denied aid for some or all of school year 2001-2002, and approximately 92,841 students have been denied access to financial aid because of this provision (2003, para. 5). However, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on postsecondary education assistance for the academic years 2001-2002 and 2003-2004, less than 0.5% on average of the almost 11 million to 13 million applicants for assistance reported that they had a drug offense conviction in the year in which they applied. GAO estimated that between 17,000 and 20,000 applicants per year have been denied Pell

Grants, and between 29,000 and 41,000[5] would have been denied student loans if the applicants who self-certified to a disqualifying drug offense were eligible to receive the benefits in the same proportion as the other applicants (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2005, p. 12). Wheelock and Uggen (2008) conclude that "relative to whites, racial and ethnic minorities are significantly more likely to be convicted of disqualifying drug offenses and significantly more likely to require a Pell Grant to attend college … It is therefore plausible that tens of thousands have been denied college funding solely on the basis of their conviction status" (p. 23).

It is a well-established fact that institutions of higher education in the U.S. do not successfully, retain, and graduate young African American men. The Dellums Commission (2006) concluded that "African American males comprised 7.9% of the 18-to 24-year-old population in 2000, and they [African American males] accounted for no more than 5.2% of undergraduate students that year, and by 2004 dropped to 2%" (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, p. 4). Furthermore, between 1980 and 2000, the number of African American men who enrolled in college in the fall semester grew by 37%, climbing from 464,000 in 1980 to 635,000 in 2000. According to Black Issues in Higher Education (2004) for African American women, the number grew by 70% climbing from 643,000 to 1.1 million in 2000, and nearly 70% earned bachelor's degrees; meaning roughly 450,000 more African American women enrolled in college in 2000 than African American men did. Equally alarming, the American Council on Education's Minorities in Higher Education *Annual Status Report* (2008) reported that the lack of

[5] These numbers do not take into account the persons who did not apply for federal postsecondary education assistance because they thought that their prior drug convictions would preclude them from receiving assistance or any applicant who falsified information about drug convictions.

African American men graduating from college over the last 20 years in 1980, earned less bachelor's degrees, 24,511, compared to African American women, 36,162. By 2000, that gap more than tripled when only 38,103 African American men earned four-year degrees compared to 73,204 African American women, and nearly 70% of African American students who earned bachelor's degrees in 2000 were women (*Annual Status Report,* 2008). The Spelling's report, A *Test of Leadership Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006) concluded there is "disturbing persistent gap between the college attendance and graduation rates of low-income Americans against their peers" (p. 5). UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies concluded (2006) that "the gender gap is not a new issue among African American college students, but it continues to widen in many areas of access, achievement, and important college and graduate school preparation behaviors" (The Journal of Pan African Studies [JPAS], 2006, p. 106).

Today, African American students are challenged by the remnants of discrimination as well as the barriers associated with finances and other factors. The nearly 40 million African Americans residing in the United States—representing approximately 13% of the total population—are three times more likely, 24.9%, to live in poverty than Whites at 8.3% (The Center for American Progress, 2007, p. 8-9). Further, opportunity gaps related to college enrollment persist among African American males and other ethnic and gendered groups. White students 18- to 24-year old were enrolled in colleges and universities, 10 and 17 percentages higher in 2004, 42%, compared to African Americans, 32%, and Hispanic, 25% respectively. In addition, 37% of all 18- to 24-year old African American females were enrolled in colleges or universities,

compared to 26% of African American males. Hispanic females had a participation rate of 28% compared to 22% for Hispanic males. White females also enrolled at a higher rate, 45% than White males 38% (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, & Fox, 2007, p. 112). The following is an overview of facts and trends highlighting the postsecondary experiences and educational opportunities of African Americans.

- In 2007–08, 49% of African-American students were first-generation college students and 46% had taken remedial courses, reinforcing the need for academic and social supports such as bridge programs, first-year experience courses, learning communities, and financial literacy programs.

- Within the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines—key areas for meeting national workforce needs—the bachelor's degree completion gap is even wider than overall: nearly 70% for White students compared with 42% for African Americans and 49% for Hispanics.

- In 2003–04, African-American students were more likely to have remaining financial need after grants compared with their peers—70% of African-American students had remaining need. About 54% of African-American students borrowed to meet that need, a proportion that is higher than their peers.

- About 46% of all African-American undergraduate students receive federal Pell Grant awards, accounting for approximately one quarter of all recipients.

- Thirty-nine percent of first-time African-American students who started at a public four-year college graduated with a bachelor's degree in six years, compared to the overall rate of 53% (Institute for Higher Education Policy [IHEP], 2010).

The lack of persistence and degree completion presents a compelling challenge for African American males. African American males entering a two-year college are more than twice as likely to be enrolled part-time, and more than half of two-year college students are employed. African American male two-year college students are far less likely to be of traditional college age (18 to 24) than four-year college students and they are also more likely to be from families of lower socioeconomic status. African

American male students have lower rates of retention—also known as, persistence—and completion rates are much lower than their peers are. Given the strong demand from various quarters to demonstrate evidence of student success in postsecondary education, it should not be surprising that multiple definitions of the construct exist. Among the more commonly, incorporated elements are quantifiable student attainment indicators, such as enrollment in postsecondary education, grades, persistence to the sophomore year, length of time to degree, and graduation (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2004). Many consider degree attainment to be the definitive measure of student success. For the 2-year college sector, rates of transfer to 4-year institutions are considered an important indicator of student success and institutional effectiveness. Indeed, transfer rates will become even more important for all sectors with students increasingly attending multiple institutions. At the same time, it is important to note that students attending 2-year institutions are pursuing a range of goals (Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003).

Finally, any discussion of the social, political, and economical barriers that impact African American males economic prosperity and educational achievement must acknowledge the impact of incarceration and the policies that have led the United States to have the world's largest jail and prison population and highest incarceration rate disproportionately of African Americans, Latinos and other groups defined as non-White. According to the Justice Department report *Prisoners in 2003*, in 2003 African American men across the nation were incarcerated seven times the rate of Whites. Among the more than 1.4 million sentenced inmates at year-end 2003, African American males in their twenties and thirties have a high rate relative to other groups (Beck & Harrison, 2004, table 12). Among African American males ages 25 to 29, 9.3% were in prison, compared

to 2.6% of Hispanic males and 1.1% of White males (p. 1). In addition, African American males (586,300) outnumbered White males (454,300) and Hispanic males (251,900) among inmates with sentences of more than 1 year. Moreover, more than 44% of all sentenced male inmates were African American (p. 9). Although White youth sell and use drugs at the same or higher rates as youth of color 38.2% of all African Americans entering prison in 2003 with new sentences had been convicted of drug offenses, compared to 25.4% of Whites. Between 1990 and 2000, drug offenses accounted for 27% of the total increase in African American inmates in state prison and only 15% of the increase in White inmates, among African Americans currently serving state prison sentences, 22.9% were convicted of drug offenses; among Whites, 14.8% (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2008, p. 14).

When it comes to education, correctional populations report lower educational attainment than do those in the general population. An estimated 40% of state prison inmates, 27% of federal inmates, 47% of inmates in local jails, and 31% of those serving probation sentences had not completed high school or its equivalent while about 18% of the general population failed to attain high school graduation (Wolf-Harlow, 2003, table 1). Approximately 1 in 6 jail inmates dropped out of school because they were convicted of a crime, sent to a correctional facility, or otherwise involved in illegal activities. Over a third of jail inmates and a sixth of the general population said the main reason they quit school was because of academic problems, behavior problems, or lost interest. About a fifth of jail inmates and two-fifths of the general population gave economic reasons for leaving school, primarily going to work, joining the military or needing money (p. 3).

Minority state inmates were generally less-educated than their White peers were. About 44% of African American state prison inmates and 53% of Hispanic inmates had not graduated from high school or received a GED compared to 27% of Whites in state prisons (Wolf-Harlow, 2003, table 7). Minorities were less likely than Whites to have attended college or some other institution of higher learning. About one in 10 African Americans and one in 13 Hispanics had studied beyond high school compared to one in seven Whites. Minorities were also less likely than Whites to have earned a high school diploma or a GED, while 26% of African Americans and 17% of Hispanics earned a high school diploma or a GED compared to 30% of Whites. Thirty percent of African Americans and Hispanics passed the GED compared to 43% Whites (p. 6).

Males between the ages of 20 and 39 dominated the state prison population; they constituted about two-thirds of all State prison inmates in 1997. Approximately 21% of the state prison populations were White males between the ages of 20 and 39, 33% were African American males in that age range and 12% were Hispanics. In the general population, these groups constituted a significantly smaller percentage of the total population — 22%. White males age 20 through 39 were 17% of the general population, and African Americans and Hispanics of any race about 3% each (p. 6). Within the 20 through 39 age group, male inmates consistently had lower academic achievement than their counterparts did in the general population. Young White and African American male inmates were about twice as likely as their counterparts in the general population to have not completed high school or its equivalent — (14% versus 28% for Whites and 16% versus 44% for African Americans). Young Hispanic males' educational

achievement did not differ by such magnitude; 52% in prison and 41% in the general population did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Moreover, four times as many young males in the general population as in the prison population had attended some college classes or postsecondary courses — 54% of Whites in the general population and 11% in prison, 44% of African Americans in the general population and 8% in prison, and 32% of Hispanics in the general population and 7% in prison (p. 6). While more than half of the general population has some college education, less than one-fourth of all state and federal inmates have any postsecondary education (Wolf-Harlow, 2003). Inmates reentering society face a wide range of challenges, from securing employment and housing to treating substance abuse and mental and physical illnesses to reconnecting with their families and communities (Urban Institute: Justice Policy Center, 2006, p. 2). Researchers argue that spending time in prison actually decreases one's ability to cope in the community and maintain employment, as the values needed to succeed in prison often directly conflict with societal norms (Bloom, 2006; Walters, 2003). Simply having a prison record also decreases a former inmate's ability to find employment that pays a livable wage (Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). As a result, many former convicts return to their criminal behavior because they lack the educational and social skills necessary to function successfully in society (Kachnowski, 2005; Tyler & Kling, 2006; Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004). The effects of unemployment, low completion, persistence, and dropout rates, high rates of incarceration, the disproportionate share of poverty compared to Whites—African-Americans and Hispanics bear a disproportionate share of poverty compared to whites (25.8, 25.3, and 9.4%, respectively, in 2009), and

the lack of income security continues to affect African American males and in many cases, have left a legacy of debt, marginalization, and poverty.

The American educational system for African American males over the last 25 years has been constructing a political, social, economic, and educational narrative that has been more systemically demoralizing for any other racial, ethnic, or gendered group since the first agrarian educational system was developed. As in the past, the current state of education for African American males tells of achievements and disaster of the American experience and it lays the groundwork in which to view the sequence of events. The present condition of the American educational system in the context of African American males looks bleak.

Too many African American males are dropping out of high school and are incarcerated. Many African American males face complex educational barriers and exhaustive social hardships since many find it a challenge to access the education that helps define a good life and a life of productivity. Many are mired in circumstance that make it next to impossible of realizing their dreams and reaching their fullest potential because of an inadequate and eroding educational system. Too many remain below the margins of income security as African American and Hispanic males are regulated to an institutional reinforced cycle of generational poverty. "They are the byproduct of many societal failures — including the failure of our nation's schools" (College Board, 2010, p. 2).

African American males in American society are in trouble. With respect to health, education, employment, income, and all of the most reliable data consistently indicate that African American males constitute a segment of the population

distinguishable by hardships and a disadvantage. Consistently, new data or formulation of data emerges that point to an educational crisis in the African American communities. Whether formulated as an achievement gap problem, a dropout problem, or a retention problem, society is left bewildered and wondering how we have arrived at such a place. Our educational system faces several challenges in the twenty-first century and is in need for a major overhaul. Educators across the nation are wrestling with the difficult and challenging dilemma African American male's face when they decide it is time to go to college. Among underrepresented students, African American and Hispanic males are, by far, the most severely challenged. The disproportion number of African American males graduating from community colleges is a major challenge for educational leaders. Data reveals the following national trends and disparities:

- In 2002, African American men comprised only 4.3 % of all students enrolled at institutions of higher education, the same as in 1976.
- Across all racial/ethnic groups, gender gaps in enrollment are widest among African American students, with African American women outnumbering their male counterparts by 27.2 percentage points.
- Between 1977 and 2003, African American male degree attainment increased by an average of 0.2 percentage points. The most significant gains were at the associate's degree level. Only 147 more doctorates were awarded to African American men in 2003 than in 1977.
- Across all degree levels, White men earned more than 10 times the number of degrees awarded to their African American male counterparts.
- Nationally, more than two-thirds, 67.6 %, of African American men who start college do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial/ ethnic groups in higher education (Joint Center, 2006, p. 1-2).

In today's public schools and community colleges, success for African Americans is too often elusive. America still bears the legacy and scars of a long history of racism,

exclusion, and low expectations for African American children, and our public education system has not adequately responded to remedy this situation.

This persistent challenge is deeply harmful to the African American community, to our state, our nation, and our democracy. With every passing year, the damage mounts and the danger to our future grows more acute. Lower rates of high school graduation and persistence to postsecondary education lead to higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of incarceration, ill health, substance abuse, and intergenerational poverty, which lead to disenfranchised American citizens. No failure is more costly than the failure to educate African American children. These are problems of a whole society, deeply rooted in America's history. McClenney (2007) concluded "the disparity in educational attainment between well-off and poor students, and between White, African American, and Hispanic students: "The gap is dangerous. It is intolerable. It is blight on America's future. And it is worse in community colleges than elsewhere in post-school education." However, while we cannot change the past, we can and must change the education system that shapes America's future growth and prosperity nationally and internationally.

Statement of the Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: first, to identify young, urban, African American males between the ages of 18 and 30, with the objective of increasing their enrollment at a local community college; and second, to assess the benefits of a program designed to encourage cultural awareness, and academic responsibility. More specifically, what benefit such programs will have on individual measures of academic development, among those recruited students, and pose the following questions:

1. What impedes African American males' persistence at St. Philip's College?
2. What institutional programs or practices support African American males' initiatives at St. Philip's College and how successful are those engagements?

Significance of the Problem

Recent attention on the status of African American men has begun to give rise to the disparities and difficulties men of color are experiencing. Pictures of African American males portrayed on television, in the news and in print media point to disturbing statistics that surface regarding the status of African American males in America. The image portrayed suggests that these young men are in a crisis disproportionally more than their White peers. Evidence suggests that being a African American man in America makes one much more likely to drop out of high school and/or college at a higher rate than any other gender or racial group, have no health insurance, have a child out of wedlock, be incarcerated proportionally higher than any other subgroup, or die at a higher rate than White male or Hispanic men. In addition, African American, Latino, and Native American students are less likely than Asian American and European-American students to complete high school (Swanson, 2004). The Council of the Great City Schools (2010) concluded that:

> The nation's young African American males are in a state of crisis. They do not have the same opportunities as their male or female counterparts across the country. Their infant mortality rates are higher, and their access to health care is more limited. They are more likely to live in single-parent homes and less likely to participate in early childcare programs. They are less likely to be raised in a

household with a fully employed adult, and they are more likely to live in poverty. As adults, African American males are less likely than their peers to be employed. At almost every juncture, the odds are stacked against these young men in ways that result in too much unfulfilled potential and too many fractured lives (p. iii).

Yet being born an African American male should not statistically dictate one's future, or one's behavior. The Children's Aid Society and The Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College Columbia University (2006) found the following: "The dehumanization of African American males over the years has left this population particularly vulnerable and often underdeveloped" (p. 4). The report concluded, "African American male's need a nation that values and protects them from those who use [them] as instruments of violence agents for social unrest and exploitative economic gains" (p. 4).

A similar study of students' culture and institutional dynamic asks, "Does the problem stem from something about African American [males] themselves, such as poor motivation, a distracting peer culture, lack of family values, or the unsettling suggestion of *The Bell Curve"* (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, III, 2003, p. 110)? Or "does it stem from the condition of Black lives: social and economic deprivation, a society that views Blacks through the lens of diminishing stereotypes and low expectations, [or] too much coddling, or too much neglect" (p. 110)?

The present day mother-son relationship reflects the history of the African American experience. Mothers, who give everything and allow their sons to live at home indefinitely, do not help their children grow up (Kunjufu, 2005, p. 57). Another mask that the African American male has used with success is inversion, which is based on the

premise that even though he cannot disguise the color of his skin, he can certainly disguise the meaning behind his speech. Inversion turns the tables, reversing the meaning of stereotypical images in a way that befuddles White interpretations of communication. Majors and Billson (1992) concluded, "This enables Blacks to deceive and manipulate Whites without fear of penalty" (p. 65). The lens in which African American males are viewed, e.g., low expectations, no motivation, a distracting peer culture, and the lack of family values, have led most scholars to conclude a marginalized male (Harris, 2009, p. 1).

African American males action exhibit poor academic achievement, are less likely to stay in college, graduate within six-years, or for that matter, transfer to a university, and years of poverty, and or incarceration, and a lifetime of poverty. Whatever lens one views the diminishing participation of African American males in higher education and society, the effects are significant. The participation rate of African Americans in higher education is low in the San Antonio, Texas area, compared to other ethnic groups. For example, within the San Antonio public schools 14.1% of high school students are African American (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2009), yet only 12.5% of these students go on to a public 2-year college, compared to Hispanics (34.39%) and White students (44.22%), (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2009). An analysis of enrollment for Fall Quarter 2009, at one local community college, indicated that 16.2% (n=1,709) of the 11,008 students were African American. Only 618 (5.61%) of the African American students were males. These numbers are representative of the low numbers of African American males not only at this school, but also at other schools

of higher education throughout this country, as supported by the findings of other national studies.

According to the American Council on Education, (ACE) (2008) when it comes to African American males on the nation's college campuses some disturbing trends exist. African American male populations are not only declining, but they have the lowest graduation rate of any other group. According to the ACE report, 20 years ago, 30% of African American male high school graduates were enrolled in college. It was a percentage roughly equal to African American females at 28%. However, the latest data reveals that while the percentage of African American male high school graduates going to college has risen to 37%, the percentage for African American female high school graduates has jumped to 42%. Perhaps more disturbing is that fact that only 35% of the African American males who enter college graduate in six years, compared to 59% for White males, 46% for Hispanic men and 45% for African American females who entered college the same year. Similar studies suggest that as African American males drop out of college, while some campuses are left with nearly twice as many African American females as African American males.

Rationale for the Study

Education today is often characterized as failing in its major goal of educating students, especially those students characterized as minorities, including African American, and Hispanic students (Quiroz, 1997). Among the minority groups mentioned, African American males are affected most adversely. Research has shown that when African American male students are compared to other students by gender and

race they consistently rank lowest in academic achievement (Ogbu, 2003), have the worst attendance record (Pringle, Lyons, & Keonya, 2010), are suspended and expelled the most often (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003), have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school, and to graduate from high school or to earn a GED (Pinkney, 2000; Roderick, 2003).

Researchers have explored certain socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that African American males have faced (Mincy, Lewis, & Jui-Han, 2006; Sampson, 2002). Several studies even purported that African American male are an "endangered species," and [there] is a conspiracy to destroy Black boys (Gibbs, 1988, p. xxi; (Kunjufu, 2005). Due in part to a decline in most major social indicators of African American men, other comparable descriptors, have continued to surface in an effort to address the adversities that some Black males face (Eckholm, 2006). Woodson (1933) concluded "When the Negro found himself deprived of influence in politics, and unprepared to anticipate in the industrial development which this country began to undergo, it became evident that he [African Americans] was losing ground in the basic things of life" (p. 11). Woodson believed that schools and colleges were miseducating Blacks because they were being taught about European civilization are not about the great African civilizations and cultures of their own people (Woodson, 1933).

With regard to education, much of the current literature describes academic patterns and outcomes within African American college-age populations denote[ing] deficits, failures, and "[African American] male being viewed as something of an anomaly" ("Reversing the Plight", 2000, para. 3). Moreover, most studies are chiefly relegated to quantitative inquiries, providing information on low enrollment, attrition rates, degree completion within six years (Allen & Dinwiddie, 2003), retention rates,

college-age population enrolled in postsecondary education, low grade point averages, and assessment scores (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). A further analysis also illustrates the adverse economic impact on African American men's lives who fail to earn at least a college degree. Finally, much is written concerning funding colleges and college services, in addition to the increased pressure for colleges to produce better data on how well higher education institutions serve students and to document a higher return on investment where African American males are of special concern.

African American men are in uncertain positions when it comes to persistence and success in all evaluation indicators in higher education. The declining numbers of African American males attending and graduating from college nationally are distressing because of not only the implications for the men themselves, but also because of long-term social, economic, and political consequences for society. Some would suggest that the psychological scars of racism and bigotry have created "structural inequities that were holding back the academic achievement of African American students" (Anderson, 2004, p. 363). McWhorter, (2000) argued that "the actual determining factor" of poor school performance among present-day African American schoolchildren is "a cult of ant-intellectualism" that is pervasive among all age groups and social classes. Patterson, (2000) on the other hand posits that the underachievement of African American students cannot be attributed to the long history of segregation and inequality, or to genetic differences between race, or class differences. Patterson argued, "It is culture" (p. 206).

Although the problems afflicting African American men have been known for decades, recent data paint a more far-reaching and sobering picture confronting African American men, while not many of the current research go past the time-honored tradition

of quantitative research. Research studies have just begun to address cultural and structural barriers that affect African American men in academics and higher education.

Definition of Terms

Black or African American — A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The Black or African American will be used interchangeably in this dissertation. However, the author recognizes the political and conceptual difference between these two terms.

Community College — Two-year college refers to all institutions where the highest degree awarded is a two-year degree (i.e., associate of arts, associate of science, associate of general studies, associate of applied arts, associate of applied science). Generally, community colleges are comprehensive institutions that provide: (a) general and liberal education, (b) career and vocational education, and (c) adult and continuing education.

Degree — An award conferred by a postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of study.

Dropout	Is an enrolled student who is a victim of attrition, who does not return to the community college to complete his/her educational goal.
Ethnicity	Ethnic origin of students,
First-Time in College Student	An entering student who has never attended any college. Also includes students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).
Fall to Fall Persistence FT FTIC	The rate at which full-time, FTIC, degree-seeking credit students either persist from the Fall term of entry (at census date) to the Fall term of the following year (at census date) or earn a degree or certificate before the next fall term.
Fall to Fall Persistence PT FTIC	The rate at which part-time, FTIC, degree-seeking credit students persist from the Fall term of entry (at census date) to the Fall term of the following year (at census date).
Fall to Spring Persistence FT FTIC	The rate at which full-time, FTIC, degree-seeking credit students persist from Fall term of entry (at census date) to the subsequent Spring term (at census date) where full-time is defined as a student taking 12 or more semester credit hours**.**

Fall to Spring Persistence PT FTIC The rate at which part-time, FTIC, degree-seeking credit students persist from the Fall term of entry (at census date) to the subsequent Spring term (at census date) where part-time is defined as a student taking less than 12 semester credit hours.

First -Time in College Student FTIC An entering student who has never attended any college. Also includes students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).

Full-Time Student Students who are enrolled in 12 or more credit hours of courses in a semester.

Graduation Is the attainment of an academic, two-year associate degree.

Graduation Rate This is the percentage of a given college-entering First-Time-in- College cohort of degree-seeking students who graduate in a specific period of time.

Hispanic/Latino The terms Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably in this dissertation. However, the author recognizes the political and conceptual difference between these two terms. Hispanics remains the most often used nomenclature to categorize people who were born or whose families were born in a country in Latin America. Hispanic

	or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Part-Time Student	Students who are enrolled in fewer than 12 semester credit hours of courses in a given semester.
Persistence	Refers to students' continued progress toward an academic goal by remaining enrolled. It is the continued enrollment from fall-to-spring semester and fall-to-fall semester or vice versa.
Retention Rate	The percentage of first-time, full-time certificate, diploma, or degree seeking freshmen in the fall who return the following fall semester, less any graduates or other acceptable exclusions (i.e. death, serious illness/injury).
Student Retention	The return (either part-time or full-time) of first-time, full-time certificate, diploma, or degree-seeking freshmen from fall to fall at census date.
Texas Community College System	Refers to all Texas public community colleges.
THECB Accountability System	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability System refers to a system used to track performance on critical measures that exemplify higher education institutions' missions.

	Its major focus is on the four target areas of participation, success, excellence, and research.
Transfer	A student entering an institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution.
Transient Student	A "transient" student is one who enrolls temporarily for a single course or one term only and, not seeking a degree from an Alamo College, and will transfer their credits back to their home institutions.
White	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Assumptions of the Study

The basic assumptions of this study are as follows:

1. Statistics obtained from The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and St. Philip's College concerning graduation rates are accurate;
2. Statistics obtained from The Center for Community College Student Engagement concerning retention rates and student success are accurate;
3. Pertinent, valid, reliable data can be obtained from participating institution through the use of questionnaires and interviews; and
4. The results of this study may prove worthwhile in the retention of Black males in some other public community colleges.
5. The study will add to the body of knowledge of Black males.
6. It is assumed that study participants will respond to interview questions openly and honestly without fear of retribution.
7. It is assumed that St. Philip's College initiatives are effective in addressing Black males persistence, graduation, and transfer rates.
8. The study will add to the body of knowledge of Black male's academic success.

Delimitations

The following delimitations are applied to this study.

1. This study is designed to discover and analyze the causes for African American male, student success, retention and graduation rates, ages 18-30.

Scope and Limitations

The basic assumptions of this study are as follows:

1. Statistics obtained from The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and St. Philip's College concerning graduation rates are accurate;
2. Statistics obtained from The Center for Community College Student Engagement, St. Philip's College concerning retention rates and student success are accurate;
3. Pertinent, valid, reliable data can be obtained from participating institutions through the use of questionnaires and interviews;
4. The results of this study may prove worthwhile in the retention of African American males in some other public community colleges;
5. This study is limited to one community college within the San Antonio community college network;
6. It is designed to discover, analyze, or interpret causes of attrition;
7. Therefore, any generalization of the findings, implications, or conclusions of this study should be done with caution given the scope and limitation of the study.

Summary

A review of the literature in relation to community colleges student success, and why students fail to complete their respective programs of studies, as well as retention practices utilized by various post-secondary institutions is most important. However, a review of the literature must start with the purpose of the community college as a provider of post-secondary career and technical education and will begin with a statement of the purpose of community colleges. This chapter will raise the issue of barriers that impede academic success and the matter of retention, persistence, and graduation rates not only as a dilemma, but also as to the institutional mission and vision and the

importance of the community college in meeting its objectives and goals defined by educational stakeholders. The emphasis is upon African American male students and the personal, situational, and institutional variables in their success efforts.

Organization of the Remainder of the study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the problem, which includes, but is not limited to, the purpose and significance of the research and the research question. Chapter 2 presents a review of pertinent literature related to the purposes of the research. Chapter 3 is one of methodology as applied to the design of the study, including instrumentation, sampling procedure and data gathering. Chapter 4 is the chapter of data presentation and analysis, whereas Chapter 5 contains summaries, findings, conclusions and recommendations related to the purpose of the research.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Overview

Despite the high number of African American students enrolled in two-year institutions, there is a pronounced scarcity of educational literature and research about the community college system in general and African American students specifically (Bush & Bush, 2010, p. 40). Furthermore, if one examines the body of literature concerning African American men and the effects of community college education, the scarcity of literature becomes even more apparent (Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001; Harper, 2004; Hood, 1992). Nora and Cabrera (1996) contend that upon review of extensive research, there were no theoretically based studies focusing on African American male community college students. To this end, this current study examines the impact of institutional factors, such as faculty interaction, campus climate, and peer interaction on the academic achievement of African American male students attending St. Philip's College.

This review of the research literature is a précis of relevant studies and monographs about African American male student success in an urban community college setting. Because of the lack of research pertaining specifically to African American men in community colleges, much has been written on academic achievement at four-year institutions. This review relies on literature related to more of a general model and theories about student persistence and retention, about African American male students, and general research about student persistence, retention, and success in community colleges. Existing models and theories about student persistence and success

at four-year institutions exist, but there is a careful distinction between findings relative to community colleges as well as findings pertinent to African American men as compared to White men, Hispanic men, and African American women in this post-secondary arena. Numerous scholars assert that higher education research overwhelmingly under represents empirical work conducted using community college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998; Somers & Cofer, 2000; Tinto, 1998) and this gap is particularly salient in the student engagement literature. Consequently, limited research exists which specifically examines student engagement experiences in community college settings, and very few studies seek to understand the engagement experiences of Black males (Bailey, 2003; Cuyjet, 1997; Greene, 2006). The existing body of knowledge is both limited, disjointed, and neglects to examine collectively the educational experiences of Black males throughout the educational pipeline (Jackson & Moore, III, 2006, p. 202).

The literature review is structured to inform three guiding questions explored in this case study. The first question and part of the literature review addresses, (1) what impedes African American male's persistence at an urban community college?, (2) what institutional programs or practices support African American male initiatives at an urban community college, and how successful are those engagements?, and, (3) what factors shape or impede student success at an urban community college, particularly among African American male students?

In print and electronic media, African American males have been inexplicably portrayed as habitual criminals, extraordinarily gifted and talented athletes, or entertainers. The images of African American males being successful and accomplished

mathematicians, scientists, professionals, researchers, or scholars are seldom seen. Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, Jay Z, Sean "Puffy" Combs, and Michael Vick are, by far, more recognizable figures than James Armistead, Crispus Attucks, Vernon Jordon, Benjamin Banneker, and Ben Carson. Academic achievement is so reviled among many young Black males; it is viewed as being "un-cool" (Majors & Billson, 1992) or "acting White" to excel academically in school (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). This can be clearly seen in schools where the male student who is known in the school community as a "Doctor, Professor," "brainiac," or "nerd," is constantly castigated, ridiculed, and humiliated among and in front of his peers.

Many African American males living in major urban centers of the United States face numerous social and economic barriers. They have been identified as drug dealers; have been accustomed to violence, and death, which give way to what they have most been associated with as a personal experience, and with all the things, they do not want to be in life. For young men who want to become something other than gangsters, professional basketball players, or rap stars, there is very little support or encouragement among their peers to pursue career goals that require extensive college and university education (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Because the school systems these young people attend replicate the dominant, White middle-class, mainstream culture, the values, the experiences found in their culture are not valued, thus, some of these students enter into the school system with an educational disadvantage.

History and Purpose of Community Colleges

The community college system in the United States is an uniquely American institution. Today, community colleges are an essential and enduring part of the higher educational landscape. Beginning in the mid nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, an array of forces banded together and advocated for the creation of what is now considered the modern community college system. Individuals such as Congressional representative Justin Smith Moral of Vermont suggested that American colleges should "lap off a portion of the studies established centuries ago as the mark of European scholarship and replaced the vacancies...by those of a less antique and more practical value" (Lucas, 2006, p. 153). The Morrill Act of 1862 permitted every state to select 30,000 acres of federal land; setting aside nearly 17.5 million acres (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 115). In addition to the 1862 Act, the 1890 Act allocated money for instruction in the colleges (Villaverde, 2003, p. 35). With public funds available through the Morrill Act and private funds coming from fortunes made during and after the Civil War, proceeds from the sale of such land were used in founding the University of Illinois in 1867, the University of California in 1868, and colleges in thirty states before 1900 (Cohen et al., 2010). The Moral Land-Grant Act of 1862 broadened the curriculum to include the agricultural and mechanical arts, which led to the diversification of higher education institutions and largely a more heterogeneous student (Berdahl, Gumport, & Altbach, 2005, p. 4). According to Ross, "land-grant colleges reached a stratum of students for whom higher or even intermediate training would not otherwise have been available" (as cited in Vaughan, 1983, p. 3).

Conversely, American colleges had dedicated a sizable proportion of their curricula to preparatory or remedial courses, coupled with low completion rates of bachelor's degrees and limited funds, four-year academic institutions were under increased pressure to admit larger freshman classes (Thelin, 2004, p. 96). This was particularly true in lieu of the emphasis on agriculture and general extension divisions, and as an extension of higher educational opportunities to students previously excluded from attending universities, and as a lower-cost alternative to private colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 2). Thus educational leaders such as William Watts Folwell, president of the University of Minnesota, and Henry D. Tappan, president of the University of Michigan concluded that "universities [needed to] abandon freshman and sophomore classes and regulate the function of teaching adolescents to a new set of institutions, to be called junior colleges" (Cohen et al., 2003).

William Rainey Harper, considered by some as the father of community colleges, established the first junior college at the University of Chicago, in Joliet, Illinois in 1901. Harper and other major figures in higher education argued for the establishment of intermediary institutions such as Joliet to serve a dual purpose. First, junior colleges would accommodate students that required further education, but are unprepared to pursue a bachelor's degree. Second, community colleges would provide the general liberal arts curricula sought by students eligible for higher education, enabling them to receive their initial undergraduate education locally before transferring to four-year schools. Consequently, there would be no need for four-year schools to expand freshman admissions and universities could allocate more of their resources to specific disciplines recommended by Harper in fields such as research and science.

Harper believed that universities like his own should focus on specific disciplines and specialization taken in the junior and senior undergraduate years, with emphasis on faculty research and post-graduate education. Conversely, a large number of students were graduating from high school and the demand for post-secondary education had grown considerably, and four-year academic institutions were under extreme pressure to admit larger freshman classes (Cohen et al., 2003). This idea expanded and became acceptable as the number of junior colleges grew quickly. By the 1920, the American Association of Junior Colleges was organized and advocated for the new junior college design, and by 1930; junior colleges were oriented toward liberal arts and occupational education. During the 1930s, because of widespread unemployment precipitated by the Great Depression, many two-year schools shifted their curricular priorities to the training of semiprofessionals, as junior college graduates were determined to expand their job prospects. Similar to present-day community colleges, these institutions provided education that was both local and affordable, and served the needs of those for whom an education beyond high school and a bachelor's degree was beyond their grasp. In fact, many of the early community colleges arose in response to local initiatives, reflecting a wide variety of functional and societal goals. Some community colleges offered vocational or technical training in response to rapid industrialization and a demand for a skilled workforce, while another mission of community colleges was to produce qualified elementary and secondary school teachers as public education systems expanded (Vaughan, 1995, p. 13).

However, several events followed World War II that exerted major influence in the continuing development of two-year colleges. In 1944, Congress produced the

Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill, which provided financial assistance for service members wanting to pursue a college education. This measure removed many longstanding social and economic obstacles to higher education, and American colleges and universities were suddenly overwhelmed by a vast flood of new and often under-prepared students. In addition, President Harry Truman appointed a Commission on Higher Education, headed by the president of the American Council on Education, George Zook. The report proposed comprehensive changes in higher education. Specifically the report recommended:

- the development of a curriculum attuned to the needs of a democracy;
- the doubling of college attendance by 1960;
- the integration of vocational and liberal education;
- the extension of free public education through the first two years of college for all youth who can profit from such education;
- the elimination of racial and religious discrimination;
- revision of the goals of graduate and professional school education to make them effective in training well-rounded persons as well as research specialists and technicians; and
- the expansion of federal support for higher education through scholarships, fellowships, and general aid (The President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947).

The commission's report also made several sweeping recommendations, highlighting equal educational opportunities for all students, irrespective of racial, religious origins or economic limitations. The report also found that economic,

curricular, and racial/religious barriers existed for the general population. The report recommended that tuition at public colleges be lowered and that scholarships be established to aid students who could not afford the costs of attending college.

Expansion soon followed, as community colleges under public funding options became part of state systems such as the State University of New York (SUNY). Other public systems quickly ensued as public community colleges sprang-up under dual state or county funding structures, with boards of governors chosen by appointment, election, or some combination of both. Community college construction and growth accelerated reaching their peak during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, most community colleges embody the sophomoric function envisioned by William Rainey Harper beginning the 20th century. Community colleges provided the first two years of baccalaureate education for students who then were eligible to transfer to four-year institutions to complete their Bachelor's degree. This option was for most students for those students on the margin, and for the ones who found community colleges an alternative to the higher tuition costs at four-year schools. Community colleges also provide low-cost summer options for students from four-year schools seeking to satisfy liberal arts requirements at lower rates of tuition. True to their workforce and technical roots, most community colleges provided programs and services for other types of students as well. These programs typically include degrees and certificates in nursing, computer programming, criminal justice, continuing and remedial education.

Historically, community colleges have long served an important role in higher education and their mission has been as diverse as the students who have attended them. Community colleges were considered a gateway to opportunity for many young and old,

minorities, and individuals who wanted to augment their skills, reenter the workplace or find a better job. These institutions offered associate degrees, certificates, or transfer opportunities and served as a low-cost alternative from which students might further pursue traditional academic programs in baccalaureate colleges and universities.

The number of colleges and the types of degrees awarded showed little change between the mid-1970s and 1993. The percentage of associate degrees conferred to occupational areas reached 50% in the mid-1970s and just over 60% in the mid-1990s (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The number of public college tripled in twenty years prior to 1975, increasing from 336 to 981, but only 10% more were added the next twenty years. In 1976, community colleges enrolled 34% of all students in higher education; by 1993, this had risen to 37% (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 328). By 1993, community colleges had become a permanent fixture in the American higher education landscape. At the end of the consolidation era, community colleges were enrolling approximately 45% of all first-time freshmen, and more than 25% of those completed at least four courses that were eligible to transfer to an in-state public university within four years of matriculation (p.329). The community college boom slowed toward the end of the century, with enrollment growing only 23% between 1980 and 1999. As of the 2000-01 academic year, there were 1,076 community colleges with total enrollments of about 5.3 million in 1999 (Kasper, 2003, p. 16). In fall 2006, over 6.2 million students (35% of all postsecondary students) were enrolled in community colleges across the country in over 1,200 regionally accredited two-year colleges (Provasnik & Planty, 2008, p. 2).

Community colleges initially were conceptualized more than a century ago to serve as the first two years of a liberal arts postsecondary education for students who

were not college-ready. However, in the century since, a significant number of academically strong students have started their community college education or transferred to upper division course work at four-year degree granting institutions. As a starting point for higher education, community colleges served a proportionally large number of students from four-year institutions who took classes at their local college during times when they were home with family for the summer, and at a reduced rate that community colleges offered. The majority of present day community colleges have a comprehensive mission that serve a wide range of needs in the community. However, in recent years, the mission of community colleges has expanded to include increased varieties of programs and a broader diverse student population (Bailey & Morest, 2004). The mission expansion of community colleges over time have included more than just liberal arts education or a platform for students to use to transfer to four-year institutions. For some, community colleges have become the only option for students who are ill prepared, under-prepared and not ready for college-level work. By way of their open admissions-open access policy, means that students do not have to compete for admission yearly nor do they have to demonstrate any level of academic proficiency to enroll, unlike the majority of universities across the U. S.

Community colleges offer equal access and educational opportunities for any students through academic transfer courses, technical and workforce education courses, and programs that lead to initial employment or occupational advancement. Critics argue that community colleges catch-all-be-all mission may have crippled their effectiveness to serve students. Bailey et al., (2004) concluded, that the multiple missions of community colleges; “doing too many things affect the quality of education, and the efficacy of any

single activity decreases the focus needed to carry out that mission, [and]dissipate as other activities proliferate" (p.3). Dougherty & Townsend (2006) conclude that "mission conflict goes deeper, and like all organizations, community colleges have limited money, time, and energy, thus serving more than one mission cut into resources available for others" (p. 9). So then, begs the question; what are the functions and role of community colleges, and are community colleges still central to the mission in whom they were initially created for?

Mission and Philosophy

Most public community colleges' primary mission is to serve their local taxing districts and service areas by offering a wide variety of vocational, technical, and academic courses that leads to certification or an associate's degrees. An added core function of community colleges is continuing and developmental education consistent with the open admission open-access policy of public two-year institutions as well as academic counseling. Besides, each institution insists on excellence in areas of academics, instruction, and public service. Nevertheless, community colleges are uniquely positioned by their purpose, and are primarily positioned to meet the educational and training needs of the citizens they serve. Through joint efforts that encourage continuity and efficiency, coupled with independent efforts and commitment to local community needs, most community colleges are student-centered institutions sharing common values reflected in their commitment to:

- the worth and dignity of every individual;
- address the nation's extraordinary diversity;

- a vision of community as a place to be served;
- excellence in teaching and learning;
- open-door policies for meeting the needs of individuals with a wide range of educational and training needs;
- the highest standards of ethical professional practice; and
- effective stewardship of the public trust and resources (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2008, p. 4).

Several questions and concerns regarding the community college's mission have reappeared throughout the institution's history. Often these questions are framed in response to the ever-changing dynamics of students, community, and political discourse. Questions such as, is it the function of community colleges to provide transfer education so that students can ultimately achieve baccalaureate status, or is it the function of community colleges to offer workforce development to business and industry (Pusser & Levin, 2009, p. 14)? Also, should two-year colleges focus on ensuring open access to all who want it, or should they concentrate more on providing high-quality job-related training(p. 14)? Careful responses to these questions about appropriate institutional missions seem particularly serious considering the increasing accountability from state stakeholders—unprecedented state fiscal cuts, substantial enrollment increases, the additional faculty and staff required to serve a growing student population, increased operating and maintenance costs, limited institutional capacity and limited space at four-year institutions. Community colleges are under extreme pressure to restructure and redesign operations in a planned, thoughtful way to do more with less.

Institutional Characteristics: Colleges and Universities

For many, community colleges are the single most important provider of access to higher education, and for some, the only option. These institutions characteristically on average enroll more immigrants, first generation college students, and more individuals with significant personal responsibilities (such as small children, working multiple jobs, or fiscal restraints) than four-year colleges and universities (Morest, Kerry, Fasnacht, & Olibrice, 2004). To meet the needs of this diverse population, community colleges provide a wide array of programs, from Associates of Applied Arts (AA) degrees designed for transfer to four-year universities, to Associates of Applied Science (AAS) degrees or certificates designed for workplace readiness, or skill enhancement.

Undergraduate enrollment figures include all students, regardless of age, enrolled either part time or full time in undergraduate studies at a degree-granting institution. Between 1998 and 2008, enrollment increased at a faster rate (32%), from 14.5 million to 19.1 million (Snyder & Dillow, 2010, p. 269). In 2008, 12.1 million students attended four-year colleges and universities and 7 million attended two-year colleges. Between 1990 and 2008, total fulltime enrollment increased more than total part-time enrollment, 50%, and 23%, respectively (Snyder, 2010, p. 9-10).

Overall, in the fall 2008, 63% of college students were White, 14% were African American, 15% were Hispanic, 7% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3% were nonresident alien undergraduate and post baccalaureate students in the Nation's 4,400 public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit two- and four-year degree-granting institutions (Aud et al., 2010, table A-39-1). The percentages of students at a public two-year and private not-for-profit two-year

institutions who were African American (14% and 20% respectively) was higher than the percentages at a public two-year and private not-for-profit four-year institutions (11% and 12% respectively). The percentage of students at a for-profit institution who were African American (27%) was higher than the percentages at other types of institutions.

At public two-year institutions, the percentage of students who were Hispanic (17%) was higher than the percentage at public two-year institutions (10%), private not-for-profit four-year institutions (7%), private not-for-profit two-year institutions (9%), and private for-profit institutions (13%). The percentage of students at private not-for-profit two-year institutions who were Asian/Pacific Islanders (5%) was lower than the percentage at private for-profit institutions (6%), public 4-year institutions (7%), public 2-year institutions (7%), and private not-for-profit four-year institutions (6%). At private for-profit institutions, the percentage of students who were White (52%) was lower than the percentages at public two and four-year institutions and private not-for-profit two and four-year institutions, ranging from 59 to 69% (Aud et al., 2010, p. 116).

The characteristics, size, and location of colleges and universities vary by type of institution; however, community colleges have relatively moderate-sized enrollments and are located across all community types. Whereas public four-year colleges and universities tend to have large enrollments, (62% enroll 5,000 students or more and private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities tend to have small enrollments, (75% enroll fewer than 2,500 students), the majority of community colleges (71%) enroll between 1,000 and 10,000 students. Unlike public and private not-for-profit four-year institutions; community colleges they tend to be in cities. Community colleges are distributed more evenly across community types, with 29% in cities and rural areas, 24%

in towns, and 18% in suburban areas (Provasnik et al. (2008), p. 2). Community colleges confer the majority of associate's degrees awarded in the United States. In 2005–06, community colleges conferred 498,229 associate's degrees; accounting for 70% of all associate degrees awarded. Forty-three percent of all associate degrees were conferred by public institutions in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities, followed by 18% in health professions or clinical sciences and 12% in business (Provasnik et al. (2008), p. 6). Clearly, community colleges are a large and vitally important sector of American higher education (Hartley, 2008). These institutions:

- Certify nearly 80% of first responders in the United States (police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians);
- Produce more than 50% of new nurses and other health-care workers;
- Account for nearly 40% of all foreign undergraduates on American campuses;
- Enroll 46% of all U.S. undergraduates, including 46% of undergraduates who are African American, 46% of those who are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 55% Hispanic and Native American undergraduates;
- Award more than 800,000 associate degrees and certificates annually; and
- Prepare significant numbers of students for transfer to four-year colleges.

Nationally, half of all baccalaureate degree recipients have attended community colleges prior to earning their degrees (The College Board, 2008, p. 5).

Nonetheless, this is not the complete picture. The caption in American higher education is one of persistence, completion, and matriculation for students of color. The demographic composition of colleges and universities has become as diverse as it has been over the past forty years. The increased diversity is largely accounted for by the

open access policy of these institutions. Community college students as a diverse group report various reasons for going to a community college. However, African American, and Hispanic men of color are disproportionately represented in most community colleges, and are less academically successful than White and Asian males, and females. In addition, community colleges offer a host of traditional and nontraditional programs for what is considered nontraditional students. A closer look at nontraditional students in community colleges leads to two interesting conclusions: (1) at least three distinct definitions have been used by researchers and policymakers to identify the nontraditional community college student population, and (2) cumulatively, these definitions include the majority of students within the community college (Kim, 2002, p. 74).

The nontraditional student is an adult who returns to school full-or-part-time while maintaining responsibilities such as employment, family, and other responsibilities of an adult life. These students are classified as adult students; re-entry students, returning students, and adult learners who are much more likely to enroll in community colleges and participate in distance education via the Internet. In 2003–04, nearly 40% of community college students were dependent students, under 24 years old and not independent financially from their parents, and 26% were 24 years old or older and financially independent from their parents, while 20% were independent and married with children, and 15% were independent, single parents (Horn & Nevill, 2006, table 2).

The Community College Student Population

Community colleges serve a diverse blend of students with significantly varying goals and levels of academic preparation. Some are returning from the workforce to

learn new skills—many are first-generation college students who have never been to a college campus. Most have significant demands on their time as they juggle personal and financial challenges. Community colleges enroll almost one-half of all undergraduates in the United States each fall. Not surprisingly, students attend community colleges to pursue a variety of educational objectives, including academic transfer, vocational-technical education, remedial and continuing education, and community service.

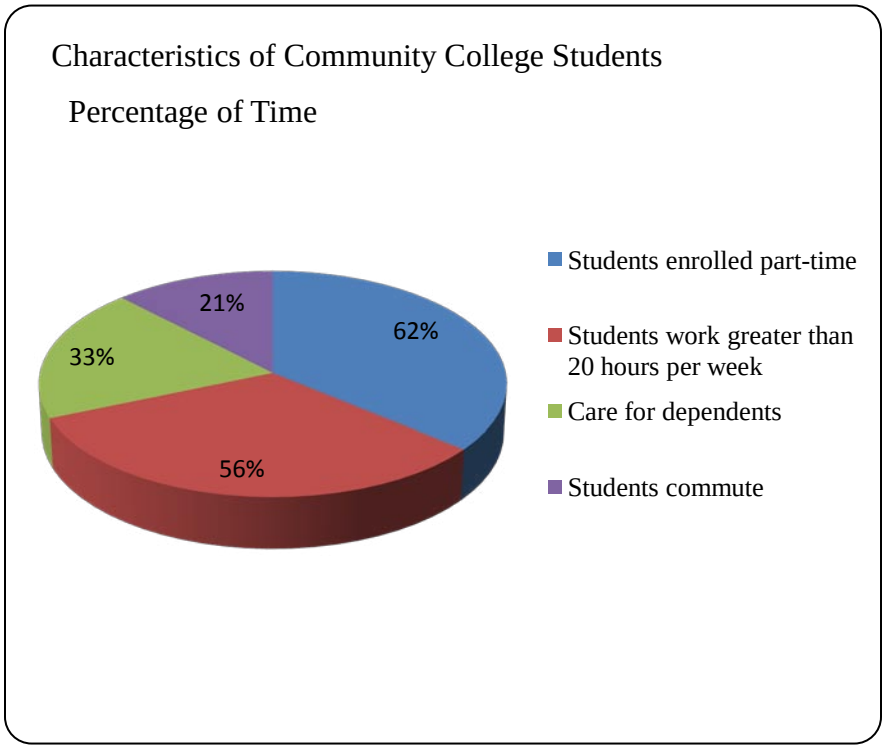

Figure 2 Characteristics of Community College Students: Most community college students are individuals who attend college part-time, juggling class, and study time with work and family responsibilities. Data derived from 2008 CCCSE.

Figure 2 illustrates that most community college students enrolled part-time 62% of the time, while 56% students work more than 20 hours per week. Many students care for dependents. According to CCSSE (2008) 33% of college students spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents, and 21% of community college students spend six to 20 hours per week commuting to and from class; while 93% of all students commute at

least one hour per week, which is significant time (p. 9). The student population consists primarily of commuter students, and a large percentage of students attend part time.

> American community colleges are the nation's overlooked asset. As the United States confronts the challenges of globalization, two-year institutions are simply indispensable to the American future. They are the Ellis Island of American higher education, the crossroads at which K–12 education meets higher education, and the institutions that give students the tools to navigate the modern world (College Board, 2008).

Whatever the mechanism for reaching out to students, the work of connecting is ongoing. It requires an interaction, a feeling of personal investment, a commitment to listening and responding. Approximately 40% of all students entering a community college are first-generation, 17% are single parents, and 8% are non-U.S. citizens. Moreover, community colleges enroll 39% of all minority students (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], n.d.). The overall college participation rate, meaning the percentage of 18 - to 24-year-olds enrolled in 2-year or 4-year colleges or universities, was higher in 2008 than it was in 1980 for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. In 2008, 44% of White 18- to 24-year-olds (up from 28% in 1980), 32% of African American 18- to 24-year-olds (up from 20% in 1980), and 26% of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds (up from 16% in 1980) were enrolled in 2- or 4-year colleges and universities (Aud et al. (2010), p. 117). Thus, community colleges provide access to higher education to a wider range of students than would be found at most four-year institutions.

Table 2 Community College Enrollments

Ethnicity	Percentage
White	59%
Blacks	14%
Hispanic	17%
Asian/Pacific Islanders	7%
Native American	1%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2009

African American Population in the United States

Significant to this study is noting the number of African Americans who are affected by these findings, as African Americans are the third largest minority population in the United States, trailing the Hispanic population. The Census Bureau estimates that approximately 41.1 million or 13.5% of the nation's populace are African Americans, including those who identify as African American or African American with at least one other race. Table two shows the majority of African Americans, reside in the South, 54 %. The Midwest and northeast each have about 18% of African American residents and the other 10% live in the western United States. African American males make up almost 48% of the African American population where African American women make up 52%.

Table 3 Black Population for the United States by Region: 2002

Area	Percent of Black Population	Percent of total Population
United States		13.5%
Region		
South	55.3%	19.8%
Northeast	18.1%	12.2%
Midwest	18.1%	10.2%
West	10%	4.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2002

African American men are no longer confined to the inner-city neighborhoods of urban areas. Therefore, metropolitan statistics are the most accurate way to count the African American urban population. The African American population exceeded 500,000 in 20 states. African Americans were the largest minority group in 24 states, compared with 20 states in which Hispanics were the largest minority group. New York, California, and Illinois, held claim to the largest African American populations, but due to rapid growth in the south, Florida, Texas, and Georgia, all currently have a African American population of about 3 million. Only New York still has more African Americans. Georgia had the largest numerical increase in African American population growth between 2006 and 2007 (84,000), followed by Texas (62,000) and Florida (48,000).

Prison

Finally, any discussion contrary to the social, political, and economical barriers that impact African American males' economic prosperity and educational achievement must acknowledge the impact of incarceration and the policies that have led the United States to have the world's largest jail and prison population and highest incarceration rate

disproportionately of African Americans, Latinos and other groups defined as non-White. According to the Justice Department, *Prisoners in 2003*, (2003) African American men across the nation were incarcerated seven times the rate of Whites. Among the more than 1.4 million sentenced inmates in 2003, African American males in their twenties and thirties were imprisoned at a high rate compared to other groups (Beck & Harrison, 2004, table 12). Among African American males ages 25 to 29, 9.3% were in prison, compared to 2.6% of Hispanic males and 1.1% of White males (p. 1). In addition, African American males (586,300) outnumbered White males (454,300) and Hispanic males (251,900) among inmates with sentences of more than one year. More than 44% of all sentenced male inmates were African American (p. 9). Between 1990 and 2000, drug offenses accounted for 27% of the total increase in African American inmates in state prison and only 15% of the increase in White inmates. In addition, among African Americans currently serving state prison sentences, 22.9% were convicted of drug offenses; among Whites, 14.8% (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2008, p. 14).

Minority state inmates were generally less educated than their White peers were. About 44% of African American state prison inmates and 53% of Hispanic inmates had not graduated from high school or received a GED compared to 27% of Whites in state prisons (Wolf-Harlow, 2003, table 7). Minorities were less likely than Whites to have attended college or some other institution of higher learning. About one in 10 African Americans and one in 13 Hispanics had studied beyond high school compared to one in 7 Whites. Minorities were also less likely than Whites to have earned a high school diploma or a GED: 26% of African Americans and 17% of Hispanics, compared to 30%

of Whites, had a high school diploma; 30% of African Americans and Hispanics passed the GED compared to 43% of Whites (p. 6).

Males between the ages of 20 and 39 dominated the state prison population; they constituted about two-thirds of all state prison inmates in 1997. Approximately 21% of the state prison populations were White males between the ages of 20 and 39, 33% were African American males in that age range and 12% were Hispanics. In the general population, these groups constituted a significantly smaller percentage of the total population — 22%. White males' ages 20 through 39 were 17% of the general population, and African Americans and Hispanics of any race about 3% each (p. 6). Within the 20 through 39 age group, male inmates consistently had lower academic achievement than their counterparts did in the general population. Young White and African American male inmates were about twice as likely as their counterparts in the general population to have not completed high school or its equivalent — (14% versus 28% for Whites and 16% versus 44% for African Americans). Young Hispanic males' educational achievement did not differ by such magnitude; 52% in prison and 41% in the general population did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Moreover, four times as many young males in the general population as in the prison population had attended some college classes or postsecondary courses — 54% of Whites in the general population and 11% in prison, 44% of African Americans in the general population and 8% in prison, and 32% of Hispanics in the general population and 7% in prison (p. 6). While more than half of the general population has some college education, less than one-fourth of all state and federal inmates have any postsecondary education (Wolf-Harlow, 2003). Inmates reentering society face a wide range of

challenges, from securing employment and housing to treating substance abuse and mental and physical illnesses to reconnecting with their families and communities (Urban Institute: Justice Policy Center, 2006, p. 2). Researchers argue that spending time in prison actually decreases one's ability to cope in the community and maintain employment, as the values needed to succeed in prison often directly conflict with societal norms (Bloom, 2006; Walters, 2003). Simply having a prison record also decreases a former inmate's ability to find employment that pays a livable wage (Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). As a result, many former convicts return to their criminal behavior because they lack the educational and social skills necessary to function successfully in society (Kachnowski, 2005; Tyler & Kling, 2006; Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004).

The nation's men of color are experiencing a time of crisis. They face daunting challenges to securing a good education, finding quality jobs, and becoming productive members of the American community. If we fail to address these issues, millions of young people will be fed into the nation's criminal justice systems (Belk, Jr., 2006, p. 30). Marable (2000) concludes that U.S. prisons have become "vast warehouses, for the poor and unemployed, for low-wage workers and the poorly educated, and, most especially, for Latino and African American males" (p. 58). By focusing almost exclusively on the behavior of the individual, some researchers and lawmakers have lost sight of the political, economic, and social circumstances in which individuals exist. Given the convergence of criminal justice policy and the long-running assault on the social welfare state, imprisonment has become the first response to many of the social problems that burden the poor (Belk, Jr., 2006, p. 30). Difficulties such as homelessness,

unemployment, drug addiction and mental illness "disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages" (Davis, 1998, p. 1).

The effect unemployment, low completion, persistence, and dropout rates, high rates of incarceration, the disproportionate share of poverty compared to Whites, and the lack of wealth continue to impact African American males well into the future as, in many cases; they will leave a legacy of debt to the generations that follow. The attainment of postsecondary education has lifelong consequences with respect to wages; for example, college graduates earn an average of 77% more than high school graduates earn, and enjoy greater benefits, less unemployment, and faster reemployment after job loss than high school graduates (Stuart, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2003). This is especially true for groups that are underrepresented in postsecondary education settings, such as [African Americans] and Latinos (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Immerwahr, 2003; NCES, 2001, 2003; Tinkler, 2002; Torres, 2004).

African Americans and Educational Attainment

High dropout rates are a silent epidemic afflicting our nation's high schools. The dropout pandemic in the United States disproportionately affects young people who are low-income, minority, urban, single-parent children attending large, public high schools in the inner city. Nevertheless, the problem is not distinctive to young people in such circumstances. Nationally, research puts the graduation rate between 68 and 71 percent, which means that almost one-third of all public high school students in America fail to graduate (Swanson, 2004; Greene & Winters, 2005; Barton, 2005; Bridgeland, DiIulio, Jr., & Morison, 2006, p. 1). However, a number of debates regarding the completion

rates and trends in the high school graduation rate have as a number of studies have questioned the validity their research (Greene, 2002; Swanson, 2004; Miao & Haney, 2004; Mishel & Roy, 2005; Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007).

Data drawn from several sources and cross-referenced from comprehensive national statistical databases such as the U. S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS), the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics annual Common Core of Data (CCD) collections, or the annual American Council on Education GED Testing Service (GEDTS) statistical reports. However, reports from the *Schott 50 State Report* and America's, Promise Alliance *Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap: Educational and Economic Conditions in America's Largest Cities* capture single source graduation data from the National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Census bureau statistical databases respectively. The *Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* (2010) calculates the percentage of the students enrolled in ninth grade receiving diplomas with their cohort at the end of twelfth grade. It allows "apple to apple" comparisons of varied districts and states (p. 6). The frame of reference for *Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap* is the nation's largest cities, rather than the largest school districts in the country (Swanson, 2009, p. 7).

Graduation rates declined to approximately 50% for African American, Hispanic, or Native American depending on the data sources, definitions, and methods used (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Graduation rates for Whites and Asians hover around 75% to 77%, respectively in 2001, with about one-quarter of these students failing to graduate (Greene et al., 2005). In 2003, 1.1 million 16- to 19-year-olds and 2.4 million 20- to 25-year-olds did not have a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school; totaling

more than 3.5 million students (Barton, 2005). However, there is a wide disparity in the graduation rates of White and minority students. In the class of 2002, about 78% of White students graduated from high school with a regular diploma, compared to 56% of African American students and 52% of Hispanic students (Greene & Winters, 2005, p. 1). However, according to a *2010 Schott 50 State Report on Black Males in Public Education* (2010) purports the overall 2007-08 graduation rate for African American males nationwide was 47% that did not graduate with their cohort, compared to 78% of their White counterpart (p.6).

The gap between White and minority graduation rates is alarmingly large. Indeed, the lowest state graduation rates for White students are close to the highest rates for African American and Latino students. In some of the states, the disparity between White and minority graduation rates is exceptionally high. Table three indicate that a group of states with small African American populations (Vermont, North Dakota, New Hampshire, and Maine) had a higher national average graduation rates for African American male students than graduation rates for White students. Table four illustrates New York State, as one of the least successful states and has the lowest African American male graduation rate in the nation, 25%. Overall, each year over 274,659 African American male students in New York City alone do not graduate from high school with their entering cohort (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010, p. 16). For districts with enrollments of 10,000 or more African American male students, Newark performs the best in relation to African American male graduation rates, table five. Table six shows three districts in Florida that have the nation's lowest graduation

rates for African American male students, while certain northern districts, such as Detroit, Buffalo, Cleveland, have low graduation rates for African American male students.

The lack of openness about the rate at which public school students graduate high school is a deep-seated problem in education. The true graduation rates at which students graduate high school provide the nation's public schools, colleges, and universities with useful information about the effectiveness of those schools. Unless we have, reliable information about graduation rates, we cannot begin to consider the severity of problems or make comparisons about the effectiveness of schools in different areas or for different groups of students and develop effective strategies to address the lack of educational attainment.

Table 4 Ten States with the Best Graduation Rates for Black Males

State	Black Male	White Male	Gap
Maine	98%	81%	-17%
North Dakota	93%	86%	-7%
New Hampshire	83%	78%	-5%
Vermont	83%	**77%**	-6%
Idaho	75%	**77%**	2%
Montana	73%	83%	10%
Utah	72%	81%	9%
South Dakota	71%	91%	20%
New Jersey	69%	90%	21%
Iowa	63%	85%	22%

Note. Schott Education Inequity Index (SEII) is calculated by subtracting the graduation rate for African American male students from 100%, the result of which is then added to the difference between the graduation rates of White and African American male students. The SEII, indicates the degree of racial inequity between those groups, illustrates the absolute effectiveness—or lack of it—in the education of African American male, non-Latinos and the difference between the success of schools with that population and their White peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, (n.d.). *Lost opportunity: A 50 state report on the opportunity to learn in America*. It is vital to note that African American male students do not do poorly in all states. As shown in Table 3, White males in Vermont and Idaho report graduation rates below the national averages for their respective 2007-08 cohort. Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2010). *Yes we can, The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males, p. 9.*

*Throughout this report, graduation rates below the national averages, and gaps above the national average, are shown in bold

Table 5 Ten States with the Lowest Graduation Rates for Black Males

State	Black Male	White Male	Gap
Georgia	**43%**	**62%**	19%
Alabama	**42%**	**60%**	18%
Indiana	**42%**	**71%**	29%
District of Columbia	41%	57%	16%
Ohio	**41%**	78%	**37%**
Nebraska	**40%**	83%	**43%**
Louisiana	**39%**	**59%**	20%
South Carolina	**39%**	**58%**	19%
Florida	**37%**	**57%**	20%
New York	**25%**	**68%**	**43%**

Note. Schott Education Inequity Index (SEII) is calculated by subtracting the graduation rate for African American male students from 100%, the result of which is then added to the difference between the graduation rates of White and African American male students. The SEII, indicates the degree of racial inequity between those groups, illustrates the absolute effectiveness—or lack of it—in the education of African American male, non-Latinos and the difference between the success of schools with that population and their White peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, (n.d.). *Lost opportunity: A 50 state report on the opportunity to learn in America*.

It is important to note that graduation rates for African American males below 50% are in five states below the Mason Dixie line for their 2007-08 cohorts. Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2010), Yes *we can, The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males, p. 9.* *Throughout this report, graduation rates **below** the national averages, and gaps **above** the national average, are shown in **bold**.

Table 6 Ten Largest School Districts by States: Best Graduation Rates, Black Males

District	Total Black Male Enrollment	Black Male	White Male	Gap
Newark (NJ)	11,991	75%	**62%**	-13%
Fort Bend (IN)	11,136	68%	82%	14%
Baltimore County (MD)	21,362	67%	**74%**	7%
Montgomery County (MD)	16,074	65%	87%	22%
Gwinnett County (GA)	20,312	58%	**66%**	8%
Prince George's County (MD)	49,211	55%	**57%**	2%
Cumberland County (NC)	12,700	54%	**64%**	10%
Cobb County (GA)	16,216	51%	73%	22%
East Baton Rouge Parish (LA)	18,925	49%	**47%**	-2%
Guilford County (NC)	15,073	48%	79%	31%

Note. Schott Education Inequity Index (SEII) is calculated by subtracting the graduation rate for African American male students from 100%, the result of which is then added to the difference between the graduation rates of White and African American male students. The SEII, indicates the degree of racial inequity between those groups, illustrates the absolute effectiveness—or lack of it—in the education of African American male, non-Latinos and the difference between the success of schools with that population and their White peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, (n.d.). *Lost opportunity: A 50 state report on the opportunity to learn in America*. It is important to note that graduation rates for African American males below 50% are in five states below the Mason Dixie line for their 2007-08 cohorts. Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2010), Yes *we can, The Schott 50 state report on public education and black males, p. 9.* *Throughout this report, graduation rates **below** the national averages, and gaps **above** the national average, are shown in **bold**.

Table 7 Ten Largest Districts by States: Lowest Graduation Rates, Black Males

District	Total Black Male Enrollment	Black Male	White Male	Gap
Jefferson Parish (LA)	10,950	**28%**	**44%**	16%
New York City (NY)	167,277	**28%**	**50%**	22%
Dade County (FL)	46,536	**27%**	**56%**	29%
Cleveland (OH)	18,419	**27%**	**30%**	3%
Detroit (MI)	47,181	**27%**	**19%**	-8%
Buffalo (NY)	10,217	**25%**	**55%**	30%
Charleston County (SC)	10,875	**24%**	**51%**	27%
Duval County (FL)	27,749	**23%**	**42%**	19%
Palm Beach County (FL)	25,029	**22%**	**50%**	28%
Pinellas County (FL)	10,703	**21%**	**50%**	29%

Note. Schott Education Inequity Index (SEII) is calculated by subtracting the graduation rate for African American male students from 100%, the result of which is then added to the difference between the graduation rates of White and African American male students. The SEII, indicates the degree of racial inequity between those groups, illustrates the absolute effectiveness—or lack of it—in the education of African American male, non-Latinos and the difference between the success of schools with that population and their White peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, (n.d.). *Lost opportunity: A 50 state report on the opportunity to learn in America*. It is important to note that the lowest performing large districts for African American and White male students are in below the Mason Dixon line. Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2010), Yes *we can, The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males, p. 9.* *Throughout this report, graduation rates **below** the national averages, and gaps **above** the national average, shown in **bold**.

The Role of Cultural Factors

Mothers can be heard referring to their "little man of the house" or negatively to that "no-good boy" who's "just like your no-good father" (Kunjufu, 2005, p. 57). Joaquin felt the need to project the image of a tough and angry Black man (Noguera, 2008, p. 4). Teachers suspend Black males for certain "cool" behavior and "attitudes" because they [teachers] perceive them as negative, rude, arrogant, intimidating, and threatening—and not conducive to learning (Majors & Billson, 1992, p. 14). From Niggaz with Attitudes (NWA) to Master P, rappers—through their lyrics, style, and

attitudes have helped carve a new Black youth identity to the national landscape (Kitwana, 2002, p. 11).

For decades, researches have examined the impact of psychological, cultural, and institutional factors on African Americans (Glennon, 2002; Leppel, 2002; Cuyjet, 2006). Based on these findings, the development of social policies changed how society viewed African American families' values and structure, in hopes of deterring the continued downward spiral of [African American] families, high incarceration, and low graduation, and high poverty rates. Hill (1972, 2003), a African American social scientist, drew on a cultural variant or cultural relativity models, and identified the strength and resilience of African Americans and their ability to survive and maintain despite living in a challenging environment. This body of research includes the impact of teacher and student expectations, personality traits, cultural norms and values, and attributes or reasons students give about academic outcomes. The majority of early research did not specifically focus on the psychological or cultural factors that affected the academic achievement of African American students. However, while each of these perspectives has its own particular emphasis, they are essentially concerned with African Americans' ability to successfully transition to a productive adult life, rise out of poverty, and secure their economic freedom and be academically successful. Thus, each theoretical perspective with its own disciplinary traditions has been employed to understand how race, ethnicity, and class affect children's educational outcomes.

Since the 1960s, a strong bias against cultural explanation for human behavior has led policy analyst and social scientists to ignore different groups' distinctive cultural attributes in favor of an emphasis on structural factors to account for the behavior and

social outcomes of its members (Wilson, 2009, p. 79). Instead of looking at attitudes, norms, values, habits, and worldviews, society as an alternative focused on joblessness, low socio-economic status, incarceration, underperforming public schools, and involvement of the courts to resolve racially biased standards in public education. Several studies gained national attention for reasserting, the disconnection of millions of African American youths from educational, economic, political and social opportunities. Psychological research has been examining the impact of psychological factors on academic achievement. They also highlight another crisis: the failure of social scientists to explain the problem, and their inability to come up with any effective strategy to deal with it (Patterson, 2010, para. 2). However, several theories have been developed that offer competing explanations for the underachievement of Black students. These theories include sociological perspectives (e.g., Majors & Billson, 2001; "cool pose"), anthropological perspectives (e.g., Ogbu, 1988; the cultural-ecological notion of "oppositional identity"), and the related psychological perspectives of academic disidentification (Steele, 1997) and psychological disengagement (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Harper, (2006) concludes that theorists hypothesize that the social reinforcement of racially oppressive assumptions eventually works its way into the psyche of African Americans and negatively shapes the way they [African Americans] see themselves and others within their race (p. 337).

Theoretical Considerations

The study of African Americans through a psychological lens has become a way of identifying variables, traits, characteristics, and solutions to the ever-pressing problems

as Gibbs argues, “Black males have been miseducated by the educational system, mishandled by the criminal justice system, mislabeled by the mental health system, and mistreated by the social welfare system” (Gibbs et al. (1988), p. 1-2). The research on African Americans and males in particular is one of the most complex and polarizing issues to study, as the academic behavior of African Americans today is affected by a series of events that have occurred since Thomas Jefferson first articulated the “inseparable relationships between education and a free society in 1787” (Anderson, 1988, p. 1). While some accept as truth that the institution of slavery has created a stigma, and consequentially a feeling of inferiority, hopelessness, and failure, others have concluded that African Americans have developed an “oppositional culture” that devalues certain domains for upward social mobility such as education (Ogbu, 1978). While other researchers, theorize that being African American and proud has become an advantage, an asset, and has given African American Americans the strength to attain academic success. Through the various web of psychological constructs, we will examine these constructs. The theories explicated here are among the most frequently cited and interrogated in academic journals and public discourse on this matter. While neither the description of theories nor explanation will be exhaustive, the attempt is to provide a useful framework for understanding the theoretical terrain related to this topic.

Theories on Identity Development

Educational achievement and opportunity often differ according to the social categories with which societies identify their world, such as ethnicity, race, gender, or caste (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001; and Fuligni, 2007). In the American educational

system, inequalities continue to be entrenched in the educational landscape in the twenty-first century (Fuligni, 2007). America's inattention to the considerable inequalities in education, has led minority students to be more likely to attend schools that are overcrowded, dangerous, and limited in the opportunity for advanced coursework to become college ready. A central thesis in this section is that disparities in educational opportunities and achievement are often created and sustained by academic, cultural, and institutional stereotypes that are ascribed to differences ethnic groups by the larger society and its institutions. It is assumed that in a society where racial-group membership is emphasized, the development of a racial identity will occur in some form in everyone. Given the dominant/subordinate relationship of Whites and people of color in this society, it is not surprising that this developmental process unfolds in different ways (Tatum, 1992, p. 9). For purposes of this discussion, William Cross's (1971, 1978) model of Black Identity Development will be described along with Helms's (1990) model of White Racial Identity Development Theory, as well as the theory of "oppositional culture" originally advanced by John Ogbu (1978), which provided a link between socio-economic conditions and individuals' behavior; Social Identity Theory, Tajfel (1978, 1982), Tajfel and Turner (1978, 1979, 1986), and Stereotype Threat Theory, Steele & Aronson (1995).

While the identity development of other students (Asian, Latino/a, Native American) is not included in this particular theoretical formulation, there is evidence to suggest that the process for these oppressed groups is similar to that described for Blacks (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Ferguson, 1997). Theories of ethnic identity development are at the intersection of developmental and social psychology. Developmental psychology's

interest in identity development stems from Erikson's (1968) work, *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* in which Erikson located the search for and development of one's identity as the critical psychosocial task of adolescence. The identity crisis of adolescence is resolved by reconciling the identities imposed upon oneself by one's family and society with one's need to assert control and seek out an identity that brings one satisfaction, feelings of industry, and competence.

Thus, this identity is comprised of both social and individual values. For this reason, Erikson contends:

> The adolescence process… is conclusively complete only when the individual has subordinated his childhood identifications to a new kind of identification, achieved in absorbing sociability and in competitive apprenticeship with and among his age mates. These new identifications are no longer characterized by the playfulness of childhood and the experimental zest of youth: with dire urgency, they force the young individual choices and decisions, which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to commitments "for life" (Erikson, 1968, p. 151).

However, in *Childhood and Society* Erikson further emphasizes the seriousness of the crisis in this stage. The adolescent's interaction with the society is at a larger scale now, which brings about the idea that he has to integrate in the society by developing an identity that is approved by the society:

> The adolescent mind is essentially a mind of moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind and, indeed, it is the ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who

> is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs, which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical (Erikson, 1985, p. 262-263).

Today's, social psychologists' interest in identity is centered on feelings of belonging to a group and the consequences of identification with one's social groups in society. Rather than discuss social identity in developmental and teleological terms, where a young person moves through stages until he or she reaches an ideal state of social identity, social psychologists have focused on the negotiation of one's social identity in the broader context based on the value society has placed one's group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals who belong to highly valued groups do not need to modify or enhance their social identity; however, when faced with a context that devalues one's group, the person may have to engage in a process to negotiate the meaning of his or her identity (Allen, Aber, French & Seidman, 2006, p. 1).

People of color in the United States are generally considered members of devalued groups (Jones, 1997). Tajfel (1978) predicted that groups held in low regard by society internalize these negative attitudes and they would be adversely affected. Given consistent findings on the relationship between self-esteem and minority group membership, researchers began to explore ethnic identity as a mediating factor (Allen, et al., 2006). Ethnic identity development may be a form of Tajfel's "social creativity" strategy because in the process of developing positive ethnic identity, individuals redefine what it means to be a member of their ethnic group and no longer allow society to define it for them. Thus, it is critical to focus on the development of ethnic identity, especially for people of color in the United States.

Racial Identity Theory

Racial identity theory can be used to address the complexity of the relationships between race and attitudes, in addition to assessing within-group differences among racial groups. Exploring within-group differences is critical in studies of race given its socially constructed nature and the tendency for results to reinforce stereotypes when generalized to all members of a racial group (Helms, 1990). Racial identity theory described several racial identity states as stages, which influence perception of issues of race (Helms, 1995). As we educate African American children, "we must learn who the children are, and not focus on what we assume them to be—at risk, learning disabled, behavior disordered, etc.," this includes "developing relationships with students, and understanding their political, cultural, and intellectual legacy" (Delpit, 2003, p. 18). Delpit underscores the importance and complexity of Black identity. She concludes that the experiences of Black students should result from their own subjective understandings, and as such, the educational system should serve as an important means to understanding Black Racial Identity (BRI).

Black Racial Identity Theory

Racial identity schemas of African American participants may address within-group differences among African American participants in their attitudes towards research. Helms's Black Racial Identity Theory (1990) described this construct as the degree to which Black individuals overcome negative depictions of their racial group in broader society and associate with one's racial group (Helms, 1990). The initial status of this model is p*re-encounter* including a high regard for the dominant White group, low

racial consciousness, and negative attitudes towards African American groups. This status is characterized by internalized racism, low self-esteem, and assimilation of White cultural values. The p*ost-encounter* schema marks the beginning of questioning a value in White culture and devaluing of African American culture. This status is distinguished by a critical experience, a shift in perspective, anger, and guilt. Immersion occurs when the individual immerses in African American culture, holding both cultural pride and withdrawal from dominant White culture. Emersion, in contrast, marks the individual's integration of the former racial identity into a new identity that is appreciative of African American culture, entailing more leniency and tolerance toward dominant and oppressed racial groups. *Internalization* is the development of a positive affiliation with Black culture and a political commitment to social justice.

Oppositional Culture Theory

The theory of oppositional culture was originally advanced by John Ogbu. This theory maintains people of color in the United States can be categorized into two groups: voluntary minorities—groups of people who willingly come to the United States in search of better economic opportunity and political freedom; and involuntary minorities—people who were initially brought into America through conquest, slavery or colonization (Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fisher, 2003, p. 7). Ogbu noted that Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Hawaiians resent[ed] the loss of former freedom[s]... and perceive the socioeconomic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression." Consequently, involuntary minorities develop a counter cultural response to academic success that leads to an association of academic

achievement as “acting White” and academic underachievement as a valid approach to maintaining one’s racial identity. Social scientists critical of oppositional culture theory assert it was tested with small, non-representative samples and, for this reason, it insufficiently explains underachievement among students of color. Others argue that Ogbu failed to capture a long history of Blacks valuing education as a pathway to mobility, which seems to unseat his theory.

Stereotype Threat Theory

Evolved by Claude Steele, this hypothesis posits that underachieving African American students downplay the importance of academic achievement because they fear fulfilling negative group stereotypes about being intellectually inferior. Steele advances the notion that Black students disengage from academic settings rather than face the prospects of failing and confirming stereotypes about intellectual inferiority or laziness (Steel & Aronson, 1995). Tested in both controlled settings and everyday contexts, the stereotype threat hypothesis seems to hold true.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Rooted in the progressive, post-modern writings of legal scholars, this hypothesis asserts that arrangements and interactions between policies, systems, and institutions serve to reproduce inequality. Rather than embracing incremental change, CRT calls for restructuring of power relations to address racism and inequality. In the realm of education, CRT has been applied to analyze inequalities in school finance, inequitable rates of suspension and expulsion of students of color and overall poor academic outcomes in urban settings. CRT posits these unequal outcomes are structured into the

systems responsible for educating students of color and must be transformed to realize better outcomes for these students. This notion suggests that academic underachievement at the post secondary level is directly linked to school failure to provide quality education for students along the education pipeline. To date, there have been no studies of the effects of high school experiences (social and environmental) on post-secondary achievement.

Access to American colleges and universities remains one of the most important issues in education today. As colleges and universities across the United States become increasingly diverse, the need to understand the role of ethnicity in college students' lives is ever more pressing. The college setting serves as a rich and exciting landscape for students' looking to develop their identities as they transition from adolescence to adulthood, developing a greater clarity about whom they are and how they fit within society. However, when educators discuss their greatest diversity challenges these days, many focus on the recruitment and retention of African American male students. At many campuses, two-thirds of African American students are female, and the lack of African American men raises all sorts of troubling questions. Higher education has experienced a discernible gender shift in student enrollments. While the number of students enrolled increased for both men and women, the increase was greater for women. From 1980 and 2001, women enrolled in degree-granting institutions increased by 41 % (from 5.5 million in 1980 to 7.7 million in 2001), and the number of men enrolled increased by 20 % (from about 5 million to 6 million). Between 1980 and 2001, the percentage of all undergraduates who were women increased from 52 % to 56 % respectively (Peter & Horn, 2005).

Summary of Theories

Theories largely developed and supported by research conducted with students at four-year institutions are most likely to fit students at those institutions better than students at community colleges. The numerous differences between community colleges and four-year institutions suggest a need to further investigate the scope to which models of student involvement, student effort, and engagement developed in four-year institutions are applicable to community colleges (Marti, 2009). Kezar and Kenzie (2006) assert that further empirical data is needed to identify important institutional differences that might affect the way that engagement is created among different institutional types and sectors. There is a need for additional research investigating academic and social engagement in the two-year college environment (Marti, 2005). After conducting this study, I believe the notion of student engagement is inadequately conceptualized, specifically for African American males, in community colleges.

Historical Developments Access and Reform

Historically, African Americans are disproportionally excluded or underserved in most institutions of higher education systems. Additionally, African Americans are overrepresented among the nations' poorest and incarcerated. Action policies that were previously successful in improving representation of African Americans and other disadvantaged students are either now dismantled or greatly restricted. African American male students have lost ground at each step in the educational pipeline including high school graduation, college entrance, college graduation, graduate school entrance, and

graduate school completion. This development has both been alarming to educators who hold dearly the ideals of the profession of education.

Further, this trend reaches at the hearts of African American educators who are intensely aware of the realities of education as a vehicle for to advance upward mobility of the race. African American students who enroll in open admissions community colleges usually require extensive developmental work. These students are unable to progress at expected rates; consequently, they drop out prior to receiving degrees or certificates. Not only is it crucial for these institutions to recognize that college is only one of the choices for potential African American students, the emphasis or major focus of attention should go beyond access and exhaust the full definition of success for African American students. In order to fulfill the promise of education for students, especially African American students, community colleges must cooperatively encourage the enrollment, retention, graduation, and continuing education of African American students.

A Response to African American Male College Success

New York, Georgia and Indiana were three of the original states that legislatures mandated system-wide action to reverse the disturbing trends in African American male students' enrollment, and persistence in higher education. Community colleges are now following the lead of universities that faced similar challenges. These institutions are beginning to closely evaluate programs that have worked and how they can be mirrored and embraced at more campuses to address the achievement gap. Numerous examples exist of viable and successful university programs for African American students. Since

the factors affecting African American men's matriculation are different from those of African American women, a number of these programs have focused on varying aspect of social and academic engagement for African American men. It is important to examine a sampling of program established for which African American men benefit.

Black Male Initiatives

- **City University of New York: Black Male Initiative**: In May of 2004, the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York unanimously approved its Master Plan 2004-2008. This comprehensive planning document included for the first time in the University's history a "Chancellor's Initiative on the Black Male in Education." **University System of Georgia African American Male Initiative**: The University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative (AAMI) was launched in the summer of 2002 as a research and marketing project aimed at identifying the barriers to college attendance by African American males within the University System of Georgia (USG).

- **Kennesaw State University - African American Male Initiative**: The Distinguished Black Gentlemen is the official student organization under this initiative, whose purpose is to elevate the minds and academic standards of Black men on campus, and those who are specifically invested in their interests. Part of this initiative also includes the utilization of current resources to aid in the retention of Black males on campus.

- **Indiana University: The Men of Color Leadership Institute:** promotes Black, Asian American, Latino, and Native American men by empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed to foster academic success; establish a support network; support the goal of graduation; and improve personal achievement by influencing leadership through representing unity and a commitment to collective betterment of humankind.

- **The Ohio State University Resource Center on the African American Male**: The mission of the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male is to examine and address critical issues in society that impact the quality of life for African American males throughout the lifespan.

Community colleges are now following the lead of universities that face the same challenges. These institutions are beginning to closely evaluate programs that have

worked and determine how they can be mirrored and embraced at more campuses to close the achievement gap.

- **San Jacinto College**: Men of Honor: aims to increase Black male student retention.

- **Houston Community College**: Minority Male Initiative to counter the on-going crisis throughout America of a diminishing presence of young Black and Hispanic males on the campuses of higher learning, in corporate America and in entrepreneurial endeavors.

- **St. Philip's College**: African American Men on the Move (AAMM) is a student organization that promotes a positive self-image; addresses current issues facing AAM students; promote a peer support system and encourages an open dialogue on various topics to allow for positive healthy debate.

Conclusion

Overall, the central thesis of this chapter is the disparities in educational opportunities and achievement often created and sustained by academic, cultural, and institutional stereotypes that ascribed to differences in ethnic groups by the larger society and its institutions. Clearly, there is still a need for additional research conducted on community college campuses that address the unique challenges and experiences of African American males. The central framework resides on the notion that institutional factors, such as campus climate, faculty contact, peer interaction, and student connections within the institution, all of which is termed student engagement, play a prominent role in the academic success of African American male students. This review examined the framework in which community college black male students institutional and cultural factors influence their success. The review further examined the institutional factors that affect the academic success of African American males. The importance of a constructive and encouraging campus environment highlights the notion of student

engagement and suggests that although important to student success; it may not be measurable or conceptually accurate for African American males in a community college setting. By understanding the experiences of African American males in formal and informal interactions with faculty, peers and with other institutional resources and service, this study adds new knowledge that will assist institutions in developing effective engagement strategies for this particular student population. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used for this qualitative research study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the African American male perspectives to determine what impedes their persistence at St. Philip's College (SPC), and what institutional programs or practices support African American males' initiatives and how successful are those engagements? Upon identifying institutional and social barriers and obstacles, the study will further investigate the African American Male Initiative—Men on the Move program to determine whether the initiative retains a greater number of African American male students at St. Philip's College. Additionally, the study will produce a final list of barriers along with outreach and retention efforts aimed at strengthening persistence rates of African American male students.

After completion of the study, a list of barriers and strategies will be submitted to St. Philip's College Vice President of Student Success, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. In addition, the aforementioned list will be submitted to the Alamo Colleges Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Vice Chancellor for Academic Success whose primary responsibilities are ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness across the district that support student programs, and integration of student and academic programs and initiatives in efforts to achieve academic and instructional targets, benchmarks, and outcomes, respectively.

This study will employ a mixed method methodology that are both qualitative and to a minor degree, quantitative to investigate the topic for this dissertation. Harper & Kuh, (2007) purport that "the value of qualitative assessment approaches has been

underestimated primarily because they are often juxtaposed against long-standing quantitative traditions and the widely accepted premise that the best research produces generalizable and statistically significant findings" (p. 5). In order to avoid overly focused variation that make definitions of qualitative research difficult to attain, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) concluded that it is helpful to understand commonly agreed research distinctive characteristics.

Research Design

I chose St. Philip's College (SPC) as the focus of this study because it is a revelatory case, whereby it is a case for which there is a belief or theory that the problems discovered in a particular case are common to other cases (Yin, 2003). St. Philip's College is a minority-serving institution (MSI) with a reputation as a leader among community colleges located in an extremely diverse urban setting and it is accessible. The diversity of St. Philip's College provides a rich setting for exploring questions about African American male students' success. Because the knowledge base for understanding the experiences of this population is thin, I chose to draw on the example of and the voices of African American male students at St. Philip's college to understand their perceptions of the forces that shape or challenge their decision to persist and their ability to succeed.

The case study enables the use of multiple methods for data collection and analysis. The sources in this study are primary materials and documents, interviews with key participants, and observations. The decision to conduct a single-site case study is supported by two of four rationales Yin (2003) offered for conducting case study

research. First, this study represents a unique case in that it is difficult to identify another community college within the Alamo Colleges system that boasts a similar history and level of diversity. Second, this study meets the definition of a revelatory case in that little is documented about the experience of African American male students in community colleges.

According to Stake (1994), a case study is useful when "opportunity to learn is of primary importance" (p. 244). A case study approach provides a mode of inquiry for an in–depth examination of a phenomenon. Yin (1994) characterizes case study research as empirical inquiry that: (1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real–life context; (2) when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and (3) in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23).

Yin states that the "distinctive need" for case study investigation "arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (p. 14). Given that standard development is a complex social process comprising activities, entities, processes, and forces and their interrelationships, a case study design [is] warranted. Researchers agree that using multiple sources of data in case study research is not only prudent, but also essential to the quality of the research produced (Creswell, 2009; Posavac & Carey, 2003; Yin, 2003). The reasons for this advice vary and range from the idea that each source has strengths and weaknesses (Posavac & Carey, 2007) to construct 'validity" (Willis, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), and triangulation (Willis, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Yin, 2003).

African American Male Selection Criteria

As described in Chapter 1, I chose African American males because the issues they contend with beg for both institutional strategies and public discourse. The selection process for this study can be best described as purposive sampling (Creswell, 2009; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The sampling are chosen because they have a particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). After deciding to limit my focus to a targeted population of African American or U.S.-born African American men, I decided to further segment the population by semester enrolled at the college and by academic performance or grade point average (GPA), as well as African American males participating in the SPC African American Male Initiative—Men on the Move program.

Because the sample size may be small in scale, there may be an opportunity to add or supplement the composition as the researcher progress. Since we are interested in interviewing students who are engaged in the SPC African American Male Men on the Move program, we want to have an opportunity to interview students who are actively engaged in the program that address African American male persistence and student success, i.e., graduation and transfer rates. Working with an institutional researcher in the St. Philips College Office of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness, we will select students from the college's Institutional Student Database (Banner) based on several key data points, race/ethnicity, gender, age, semester of enrollment and grade point average. Only students who self-identified as male, African American or African-American, and U.S., born will be selected for this study. Participants cannot be female; under the age of

18 or over the age of 35; African American or African American but born outside the continental United States; naturalized citizens or born in a U.S. territory such as the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, or Guam. The exclusion of individuals who are female and/or from other racial/ethnic groups is necessary to ensure the intent of this study. The decision to exclude subjects under age 18 is designed to eliminate programs such as Early College high school, Dual Credit, and Tech Prep students who concurrently enroll in a high school and college courses. I assumed their experiences are not typical of the general college population, therefore, the age selection criterion is grounded in the knowledge that the overwhelming majority (82%) of St. Philip's College matriculated students are between the ages of 18 and 34. As a result, I am concerned that the experiences of students over age 35 are not representative of the traditional college age population.

Data Collection

Student participants in this study will be recruited from the St. Philip's college African American Male Initiative in the spring of 2010, with historical quantitative data collected from the program inception—2005. The researcher will meet with a key administrator in the African American Male Initiative to obtain permission to both focus the study on students in the program and obtain an initial list of potential participants who are engaged in the program that might be willing to participate. Identified students will be contacted via e-mail, phone, etc., and invited to participate in the study. Both qualitative and demographic data will be collected from participants. A 5-minute demographic survey about their background and family characteristics will be

administered before every interview. The primary source will use four means of data collection: institutional and student records (i.e. transcript data); individual interviews; and documents pertaining to the African American Male Initiative at St. Philips College.

The interview protocol will be formulated based on a review of the literature on the challenges and experiences of academically and socially challenged African American male students. Interview questions will be composed to assess subjects' perceptions of their sources of motivation, feelings about their academic transition, views on the prevalence of stereotyping, opinions about what factors served as barriers to their academic achievement, and how has the Men on the Move program created a culture of success.

Development of Interview Instrument

An interview instrument will be designed to elicit detailed information regarding institutional policies and/or practices directly related to the retention of African American male students. The questions will be open-ended. Practices, such as mentoring tutoring; remedial courses; and pre-enrollment, summer, catch-up programs will be anticipated. Features unique St. Philip's College will also be expected. Answers to open-ended questions will be combined into general themes whenever possible for analysis. Follow-up calls will be used to enhance and/or clarify responses—if needed. The validity and reliability of the data collection methods will be addressed by creating an interview instrument that will be as independent of any specific student and a pilot test will be conducted with staff for scope and clarity.

Analysis of Data

This research will employ methodological triangulation to strengthen its scope and design, using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods. Qualitative methods included field-based interviews and the gathering of brochures, catalogs, announcements and other institutional artifacts. Quantitative measurements included the number of African American males who persisted, graduated, or transferred compared to the total number of African American males enrolled at the institution and are characterized as Men on the Move participants. The statistics required for this calculation will be compiled from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and St. Philip's College. The total African American male enrollment during an identified period will be divided into the number of persistence, graduation, and transfer rates that the college awarded and documented to African American, males during the same period.

The resulting persistence and graduation rates will be used to compare outcomes based on non-Men on the Move program participants. Qualitative data, in the form of interviews and the collection of campus artifacts, contained descriptions, opinions, perceptions, and other interpretive information relevant to the purpose of the study. The understanding or perception of others is interpretive, rather than measurable, and necessitates an in-depth qualitative analysis. The information gathered will be analyzed using explanatory codes.

The descriptions, reasons, opinions, perceptions, and other qualitative data will be sorted into the selected codes, in a search for patterns, themes, and/or causal links. The purpose of this study is to identify African American males in the African American Male Initiative Men of Honor program with African American, male persistence,

graduation, and transfer rates and to ascertain the influences programs that could be applicable to other community colleges, and thus assist them to enhance their persistence, graduation, and transfer rates. No formal hypotheses will be stated or tested. Although various persistence, graduation, and transfer rates will be compared, no statistical significance is implied.

Institutional History

Bishop James Steptoe Johnston of the St. Philip's Episcopal Church of the West Texas Diocese founded St. Philip's College in 1898. In his initial address to 1900 church members at the twenty-sixth Convocation of the Western Texas District, he offered his feelings about the education of African American people. Johnston concluded that the imperfect or improper education of a man would make him more dangerous than he was before. Bishop Johnston stated, "The only real education for men is that which takes into account his whole being, physical, intellectual, and spiritual" (as cited in Norris, Jr., 1975, p. 43). Johnston thought the education of Blacks was a viable cure for this country's race problems, according to the college's historical records. Therefore, he bought property adjoining St. Philip's Church in San Antonio's La Villita neighborhood for $400 and spent $1,800 building a one-room brick schoolhouse that 18 students attended (Norris, Jr., 1975, p. 58). By 1899, the school became St. Philip's College Industrial School.

The original school began as a sewing class for black girls, opening its door in a house located in an area known today as the La Villita Historical Arts Village in downtown San Antonio (St. Philip's College [SPC], 2010, p. 2). The school eventually

came of age under the leadership of Artemisia Bowden—a teacher and daughter of a former slave. She later assumed leadership of the school and served as the school's administrator from 1902 to 1954. Her relentless dedication pulled the college through trying financial times during the Great Depression and pushed the college to expand.

During Ms. Bowden's tenure as an advocate for African American education, two events, one related to World War I and the other to the southern view of black education, had a major impact on the future of St. Philip's College (SPC) during this period. During World War I, San Antonio, a center of military activity, continued to attract large numbers of people and with a growing population and the commercial downtown beginning to expand, local leadership put pressure on St. Philip's College to move the school. For St. Philip's to evolve and just to exist, Ms. Bowden raised adequate money to move the college to its present, 40-acre location on San Antonio's east side. The college moved in 1917 from the school's original site to a new location and in the process became co-ed in the early 1920s, and was classified as a Class-A junior college in 1927 (Pluviose, 2007, p. 24) .

The College became affiliated with San Antonio College and the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) in 1942, marking the end of the college's era as a private institution. The transition to a public junior college increased the diversity of St. Philip's population. Ultimately SAISD and was replaced, creating the San Antonio Union Junior College District—now the Alamo Community College District. Under this administration in 1955, St. Philip's college began admitting white students and African American students were admitted to San Antonio College.

Dr. Lanier E. Byrd, who once served as the vice president of academic affairs at the college, witnessed the transformation personally. First as a student and then during a 35-year career as a professor and administrator, Dr. Byrd said the college was "99% Black" (Pluviose, 2007, p. 25). Historically, a larger portion of the African American population of San Antonio has always been concentrated in the east portion of the City. However, according to the US Census Bureau (2000), the African American population of San Antonio is primarily south of I-35 and west of I-410, which represents more than 60% of the population in census tracts 1308, 1310 and 1311. In tracts 1305, 1306, and 1309[6], the African American population comprises 40 to 60% of the population, as representative in Figure three (City of San Antonio [COSA], 2010, p. 1-6).

[6] According to the US Census Bureau, census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. A local committee of census data users delineates tracts for presenting data. Census tract boundaries normally follow visible features, but may follow governmental unit boundaries and other non-visible features in some instances; they always nest within counties, and are designed to be relatively homogeneous units with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions. Census tracts average about 4,000 inhabitants. Census tracts 1305 1306 and 1309 are low-income neighborhoods in the eastside San Antonio and are contained within the zip codes 78202 and 78203, surrounding the SPC campus.

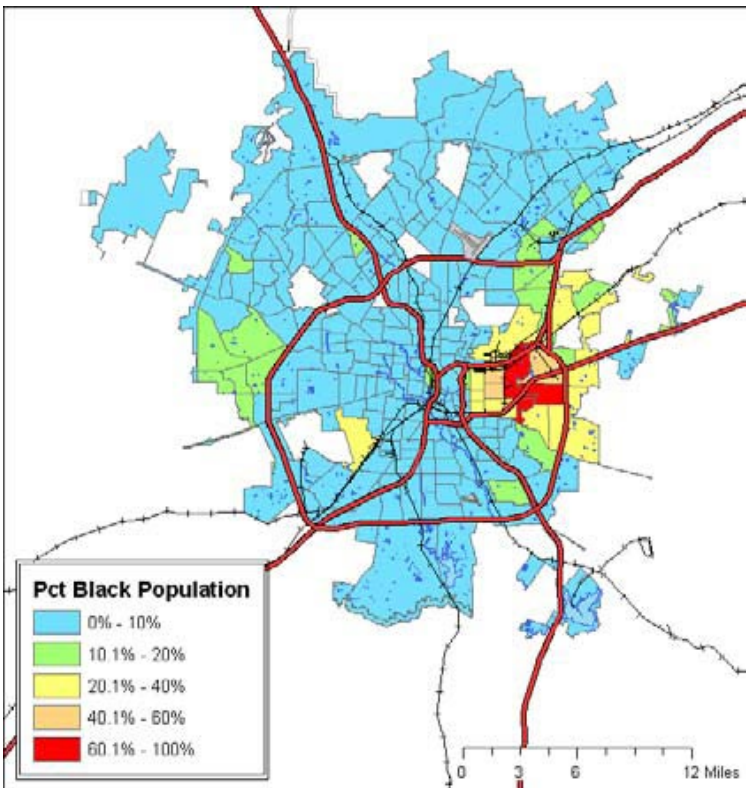

Figure 3 San Antonio African American Population in Selected Census Tracts. Representation of the African American population since 2000.

With ethnic and socioeconomic segregation common in San Antonio, the Eastside, a cluster of contiguous neighborhoods just east of downtown, was the traditional African American base. In recent generations, the area has become more ethnically diverse, now containing a Hispanic majority and an increasing Mexican immigrant population. However, the African American culture remains strong despite the myriad challenges to a multi-cultural neighborhood. Moreover, SPC is continuously challenged just as San Antonio's population is largely Hispanic. St. Philip's College student population mirrors the population of the city. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004), seven undergraduate attributes are negatively associated with postsecondary degree attainment. They are characterized by delayed college entry, part-

time attendance, and financially independent status, single parent status, having dependents, not having a regular high school diploma, and working full-time (Pew Center, 2004). As in the case of African American males, Latinos lag every other major population group in attaining college degrees, especially bachelor's degrees. This partly reflects the difficulties Hispanic youth have in completing high school and the influx of adult less-educated Latino immigrants, but the outcomes of Latinos in postsecondary education require attention as well(Vernez & Mizell, 2002). The average number of risk attributes for Hispanic undergraduates is 2.4, in comparison to 2.0 for white undergraduates and 2.7 for African American undergraduates (Pew Center, 2004).

Today, St. Philip's College is one of five Alamo Community Colleges. Located in heart of the Eastside, SPC serves an economically, ethnically, and racially diverse population. In San Antonio, Texas in which SPC is located, the racial/ethnic composition is 58.3% Latino, 31.3% White, 7.8% African American, 2.2% Asian, and .2% Native American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Research Site

St. Philip's College was chosen because of its positive reputation for historically serving African American students and meeting the needs of a diverse student population. African American students, however, particularly males, remain generally one of the lowest performing subgroup at the institution, which is significant considering the participants in the study found the institution to be welcoming, open, and supportive. Today, the college serves close to 12,000 credit students, 8,000 non-credit students in a distinct number of disciplines and offers more than 151degree and certification programs.

SPC has earned statewide distinction in a number of disciplines (SPC Fact Book, 2009-2010, p. 4-6). SPC is regarded as one of the leading community colleges in the State in teaching, programs, and services.

Seeing as SPC serves a diverse student population from various socio-economic backgrounds. The median household income in 2009 for the Eastside (the community surrounding SPC) was $36,651; however Bexar County median family income from the same year was $45,749, and median income for the state of Texas in 2009 was $50,049 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Clearly, SPC serves students from both, upper and lower socio-economic communities, as is the case for most community colleges. St. Philip's College also serves an ethnically diverse student population. Presently, the profile of students enrolled in credit courses at St. Philip's College (SPC) from 2005-09, i.e., gender, ethnicity in the Spring 2009 is approximately 56% female, and 44% is male (SPC Fact Book, 2009-2010, p. 41). Although close to two-thirds of the SPC student population is in the 18-24 age range, the age distribution at SPC is from 18 to 50+years, however, 50+ is three percent of the total student population and the average student age is 26 years old (p. 30).

Another reason why SPC was selected as the research site is that it has one of the lowest students' graduation rates amongst public two-year colleges in the state. Figure 4 and 5 illustrates public two-year college graduation rates within 150% of normal time graduation[7]. SPC 150% normal time graduation rate is in the bottom quartile (six

[7] Graduation rates can be measured over different lengths of time. "Normal time" is the typical amount of time it takes full-time students to complete their program. For example, the "normal" amount of time for many associate's degree programs is 2 years. Not all students complete within the normal time, so graduation rates are measured by other lengths of time as well, including "150% of normal time" (e.g., 3

percent) of the sixty-six public two-year Texas state college's and College Districts. Access without success is an unfilled promise and is a missed opportunity with economic consequences. As a result, America maybe is slipping behind our global competitors – and, even more alarming, between generations. The consequences of falling short of college completion are not only significant for once promising students, but also are severe for nations economy and position in the global competition for an educated workforce.

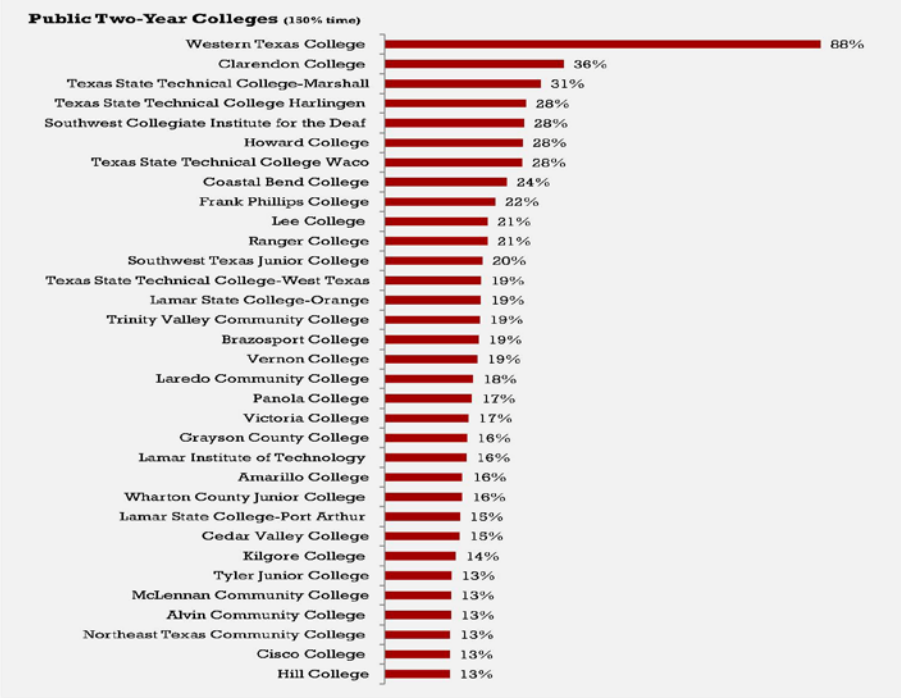

Figure 4 Texas Public Two-Year Colleges: Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, (IPEDS) 2007- 2008. Graduation rates for Texas two-year colleges are for first-time, full-time students completing certificate or degree within 150% of normal program time.

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years for a 2-year program) and "200% of normal time," or twice as long as the normal time (e.g., 4 years for a 2-year program). U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) *2007.*

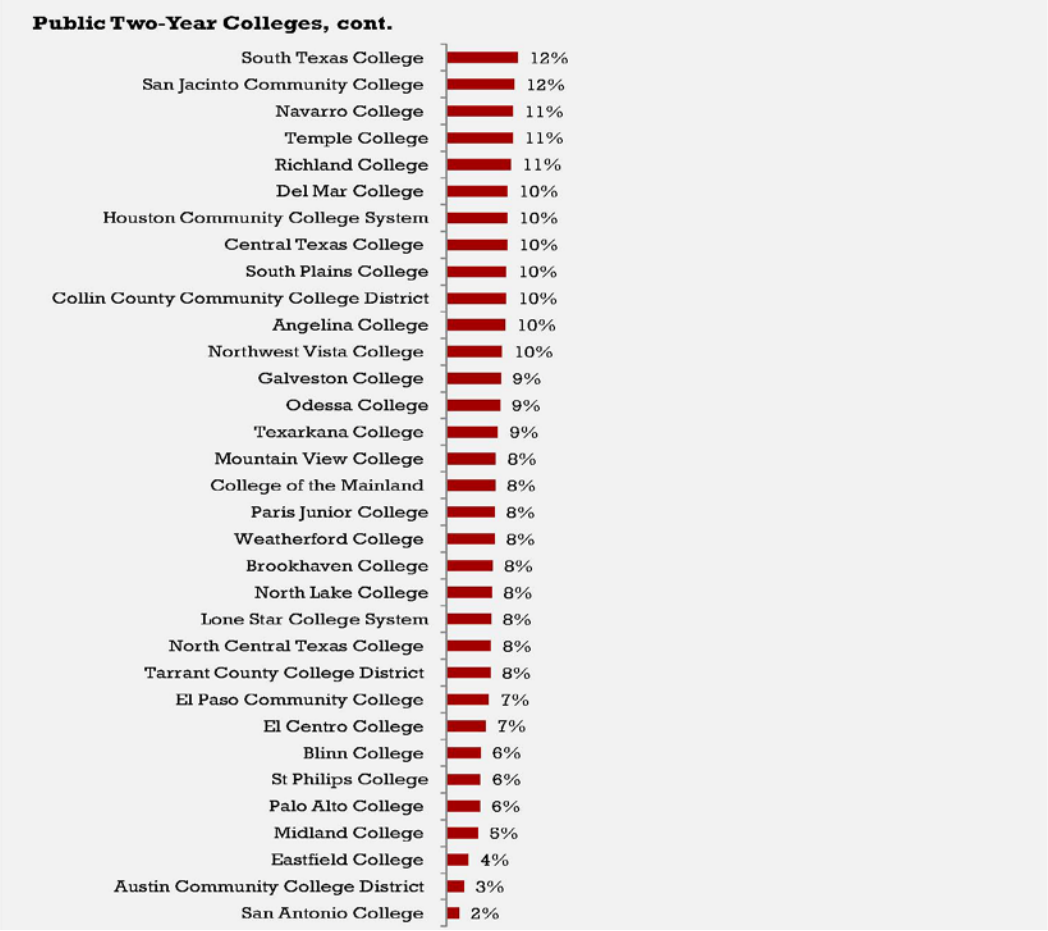

Figure 5 Texas Public Two-Year Colleges – continues, Reported by institutions to NCES, (IPEDS). St. Philip's College graduation rates for two-year colleges are for first-time, full-time students completing certificate or degree within 150% of normal program time is six percent, one of the lowest performing.

Figure 6 illustrates elements of graduation rates among public and private colleges. According to the Complete College America, 21% of Texas public two-year college students graduate with 150% of normal time while 53% graduate from a public four-year college and 64% from a private four-year college. In addition, nationally, 23% of white students who enter public community colleges full-time complete an associate degree within three years. Rates for African-Americans and Hispanics students are even lower: 11% and 15% respectively (Complete College America, n.d.).

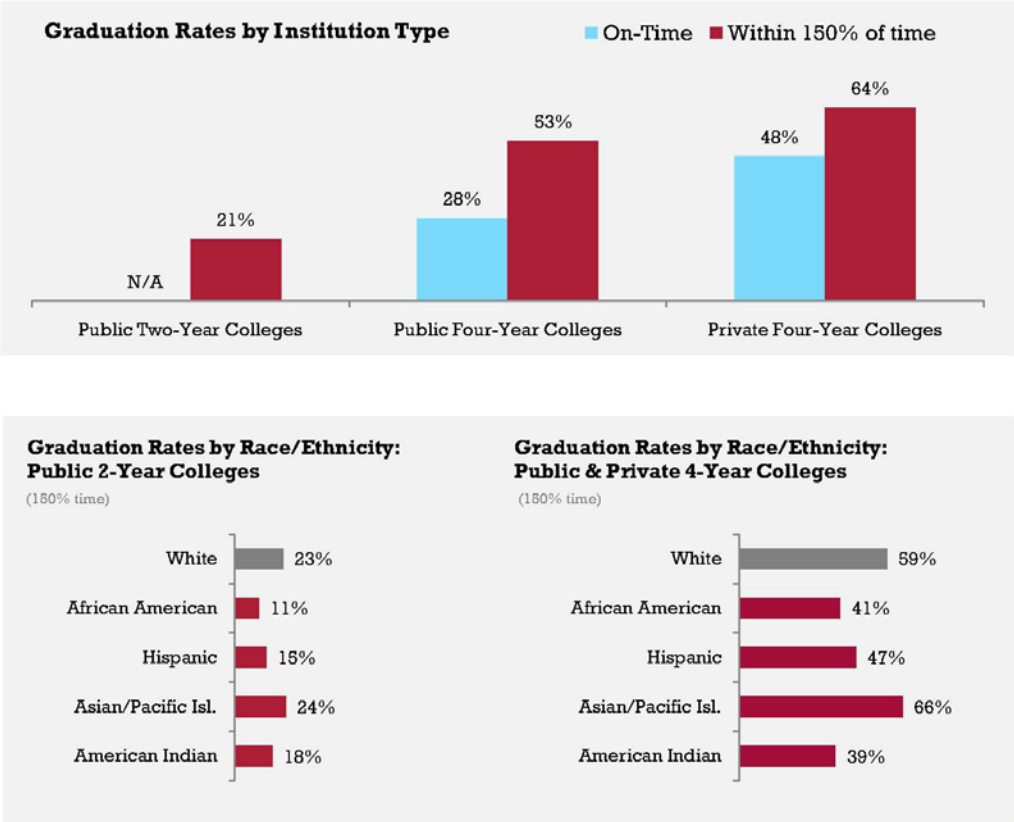

Figure 6 Graduation Rates by Institutions, Ethnicity, and Race: Graduation Rates by Institutions, Ethnicity, and Race. U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2007. Texas must raise completion rates overall and place extra focus on closing the college attainment gap for underrepresented students.

In contrast, African American students are one of the lowest performing student populations at St. Philip's College. According to the National Center for Education Statistic, SPC graduated 11% of White students, five percent Hispanic student and three percent of African American within 150% of "normal time" (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). Moreover, the transfer rates for Alamo Colleges Asian American/Pacific Islander students (34.0%), White students (28.1%), Hispanic students (19.9%), and African American student (17.6%) Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 in the same year were significantly lower (Alamo Colleges [AC], 2009). Across multiple

measures, African American students and males reported the lowest success and retention rates when compared to other peer groups.

In 2009-10, total degrees and certificates awarded by level, and ethnicity were 1,415[8] (course completion). The total number of awards, certificates by type, core completers, and field of study completer's for African American students were 11.02%, compared to 48.13%, and 36.40% for Hispanic, and White students, respectively; these success rates are fairly consistent with other institutions, in which African Americans generally report lower rates (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], n.d., p. 8). Males also reported lower success and retention rates, when compared to females. Although these statistics are not desegregated by gender and ethnicity, however, it is clear, based on reports, that African American males are one of the lowest performing sub-groups at the institution. SPC as an ideal site for this study, because it provided an opportunity to understand African American male students' engagement experiences on a campus in which they are the underperforming student group, which is consistent with statewide and national trends. Furthermore, no inquiries have been conducted to determine why African American males are one of the lowest performing sub groups at the institution. This study sought to understand African American students' experiences and to better understand their engagement experiences and how these experiences influence their success and achievement. As a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) Historically Black College (HBCU), and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS), St. Philip's

[8] Awards, certificates by type, core completers and field of study completers, race/ethnicity, level of award and gender. These numbers are duplicated, and student may earn multiple awards during a school year. Degrees include associate and baccalaureate degree.

College responsive to a population rich in ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity, seeks to create an environment that fosters quality in academic achievement, while expanding its commitment to success. However, access does not always lead to success.

Today, St. Philip's College remains a multi-campus institution of the Alamo Colleges, joining three other colleges – San Antonio College, Palo Alto College, and Northwest Vista College – in meeting the educational needs of San Antonio's growing and diverse community. St. Philip's is among the oldest and most diverse community colleges in the nation and one of the fastest growing in Texas (St. Philip's College [SPC], 2009, p. 2).

Community and Student Needs

St. Philip's growth is closely associated with quality of its instruction and services and the breadth of its workforce development programs. According to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, SPC ranked first in the nation in Support for Learners, first in Texas in the categories of Academic Challenge, and Students Acquiring Job or Work Related Knowledge and Skills (Alamo Colleges [AC], 2010, p. 1). According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), SPC also ranked first in Texas for awarding the most degrees and certificates to at risk students in critical fields in science, technology, engineering, and math (AC, 2010, p. 1). SPC awards 86 different Associate Degrees in Applied Science, Health Science, and Arts and Sciences, and 65 Certificates of Completion in workforce development and continuing education coursework (SPC, 2010, p. 4-7).

The College remains responsive to the needs of student's because of its location, in the heart of San Antonio's Eastside—an impoverished area challenged by substandard housing, minimal commercial development(City of San Antonio [COSA], 2010, p. 4), higher than average high school dropout rate, and a poverty rate higher relative to the general San Antonio population. Because of such diverse issues, the neighborhoods surrounding the campus have been pivotal in supporting the college, which has been a mainstay since its founding in 1898. Nonetheless, St. Philip's College challenges its role and effectiveness in educating this population. As an institution of higher education addressing community and student needs, SPC is aware of its responsibility to access, education, academic and institutional accountability, and maintaining quality higher education standards. Educational institutions across the country face significant challenges in these areas but the gaps are especially significant in low-income neighborhoods, especially in the San Antonio areas contained within the zip codes surrounding SPC campus, as demonstrated in table 8.

Table 8 Degree Attainment in Specific San Antonio Zip Codes

Degree Attainment	San Antonio	78202	78203
Adults with a high school diploma or higher	75.1%	54.7%	53.2%
Adults with a Bachelors Degree	21.6%	4.3%	8.6%

Note. Average bachelor degree attainment Bexar County is 24.6% of the total population. Data derived from U.S. Census Data, 2005-2009.

In response to the dismal statistics, the St. Philip's College (SPC) strategic plan established a primary goal of increasing access to higher education by continuing to maintain an open door to the community and offering affordable, quality, higher education. An enabling objective is to recruit and enroll students that reflect the economic and cultural diversity of the community, especially those living in low educational areas like zip codes 78202 and 78203. In pursuant of these objectives, SPC designed measurable outcomes by:

a. offering programs, activities and events that are specifically designed to bridge the academic, social and curricular gaps that arise during the transition from high school to college;
b. seeking to increase college participation among low income individuals who had either not considered college as an option or who require skills improvement for better employment;
c. partnering with businesses, the local workforce development board, organizations that advocate a high quality vocational skills training resource to develop the customized job skills training that will enhance the employability

of unemployed and underemployed Eastside residents in high demand, high wage occupations; and,

d. connecting the College with its neighbors through outreach and collaboration activities held during community events and celebrations.

In Fall 2010, SPC targeted outreach activities at local high schools and charter schools with large African American student populations. The initiatives focused on increasing enrollment of African American students from targeted schools and outlying areas. Modifications in their outreach focused on increasing retention, graduation, and completion rates.

Summary

This chapter provides the methodological design of this qualitative investigative study. In an effort to describe and interpret the engagement experiences of African American males at St. Philip's College, a research technique that involved the careful description of aspects of human life as they are lived was conducted. The data collection methods of this study included individual interviews with six separate one-on-one interviews. A systematic approach to analysis was used for this study; the approach included describing personal experiences with the event, reducing the information to noteworthy statements or quotes, collating the statements into themes, developing a narrative of the experiences, developing structural description of their experiences, and combining the textual and structural descriptions to convey the overall spirit of their experience. Lastly, the research findings were validated using qualitative strategies of descriptive research methods.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that African American male community college students perceive as important to their academic success. This chapter presents relevant findings addressing two research questions: 1) What impedes African American male's persistence at St. Philip's College?; and 2) What institutional programs or practices support African American males' initiatives at St. Philip's College and how successful are those engagements? In Chapter three, context was offered for viewing the findings of this study. The theory of student engagement, persistence, and graduation rates were explored by attempting to recognize the experiences of African American males regarding faculty and peer relations, use of time on campus and outside of class, and utilization of institutional resources in a community college environment. This chapter consists of six themes that emerged from examining the relationships among six participants and are summarize to capture the essences of the students' experiences during data analysis phase.

The six themes that emerged were important to SPC African American males. The responses are: 1) Culture of Success – a receptive and nurturing campus environment promotes greater student satisfaction; 2) Advocate - students are engaged by faculty who genuinely care and have a passion for teaching and their well-being; 3) Commuter Student - time constraints are real barriers to student engagement; 4) Achievement Resilience - having clear educational goals and an identified path in which to achieve it; 5) Relationships- educational performance is influenced by social and cultural interests of

students; 6), and Race Consciousness – knowledgeable about racial, ethnic and cultural differences and is no longer fearful, intimidated, or uncomfortable with the reality of race.

The participant's perspectives shed light on the discourse regarding African American male academic success in a community college. The student's insightful and honest responses captured the essence of this composite study. Most apparent were the respondent's clear understanding of the choices they made and the pathways they took to reconstruct their lives. The findings for each theme come directly from the cultural texture and structural descriptors; literally providing the backdrop, which illustrate the essences of the students' experiences. Among the most relevant institutional factors student identified were campus environment. Among the most germane personal expectations is that the individuals want more out of life. Both influenced by people inside and outside the college, and most of all— structures that shaped their sense of self, as well as evaluating educational and occupational possibilities. The respondents were very knowledgeable about racial, ethnic, and cultural differences and the reality of racial identity.

All six participants had identified clear educational goals and an established educational plan developed with a counselor and or a family member, which is critical for community college students, as this type of structured support tends to lead to higher completion rates. Through this study, it became evident that the participants had previously developed an educational plan with a counselor and were more likely to exhibit engagement behaviors by exerting time and effort into educationally focused actions. For example, these six students recognized the importance of getting to know

their instructors; they engaged in class and approached instructors after class to ask questions; they utilized support services, i.e., math tutoring; and a clear understanding of their peer interactions on campus, thus they had a clear perceptive view about the distractions and social interactions on campus. Each of these experiences will be further explored through the six themes presented in the following sections in this chapter.

Participant Responses by Research Question

Each semester, community colleges meet the needs of a diverse student body that includes recent high school graduates, workers returning to college to learn new skills, and first-generation college students. These students come to college with widely differing goals and a range of academic preparation. As different as they are, most community college students are attending classes and studying while working; caring for dependents; and juggling personal, academic, and financial challenges, as well as limited time and commuting. The characteristics described on these pages are the reality of community colleges student today.

I conducted individual interviews at the Learning and Leadership Development Center. The facility is located on the campus of St. Philip's College. The participants are currently enrolled African American males at SPC. The respondents were not part of the African American Male Initiative-Men on the Move program. The individual interviews totaled six, and the participants' average ages are 25. Participants were randomly selected from an estimated African American male population of 1,900 students. SPC office of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness provided the researcher with the names, address, telephone numbers and email addresses of the students.

Once I received the student contact information, I began to send emails to the students asking them if they would like to participate in my study. Some students responded in the affirmative and I schedule appointment with the students. This process was on going for approximately three weeks, with multiple no-shows. Once I realized the African American students were not going to honor their verbal commitment to meet with me, I created a 3x5 index card with my study narrative and my contact information on the card—as well as the prize I would raffle-off after the completion of the study. I walked the campus, asking the student to participate in my study. I randomly selected students. These students were sitting in study areas, hanging out in the mall area of the campus, or in the cafeteria having lunch or breakfast. I asked them if they would they be interested in participating in a study on African American male students at St. Philip's College. I was able to confirm commitment from six students.

I then proceeded to tape the interviews with the six African American male students at the Learning and Leadership Development Center. All of the interviews are included in this section of the paper. In some cases, words, phrases, and statements were shifted in order to provide the responses with reason and clarity. False starts, repetitions, "you know," and "ummm's" have been edited out. This section contains excerpts of the participant responses gleaned from the literal transcripts of the interviews held on the campuses of St. Philip's College. The major ideas discussed during the response to the interview questions are presented in this section. The monologues presented are not in order in which they were recorded. The responses are chosen and arranged for clarity and effect to focus on differences and, or similarities among the students. The names of persons have been changed to protect promised anonymity.

In the analysis of the data presented, I utilized axial coding. Axial coding is consistent with the goal of qualitative studies and provides specific examples of discourse that illustrate or alludes to an affinity (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 315), which give voice to and explores the perspectives of African American men in an American community college system regarding factors contributing to their academic success. Rather than regurgitating pre-established themes from past and current research literature, nuances were placed on creating a platform where participants could construct, counter narrate, describe their experiences in their own words, and then identify themes, which emerged from their descriptions of their experiences.

According to Lofland, Snow, & Lofland, (2006), the most fundamental aspect of a person social setting is that of meaning. These are the dialectal, categories that make up a participant's view of reality and with which an action are defined, and is referred to by social analysts as culture, norms. Understanding social reality, ideology, beliefs, worldview, perspective, and stereotypes according to Northcutt et al., (2004), are defined social systems in which human interpretation of meaning is involved (p. 40). The field of social movement studies has moved several times toward the recognition and analysis of various phenomena. Mean-making for example is generally ignored, and is a concept that draws on multiple traditions in sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences (Kurzman, 2008, p. 5).

> Mean-making at its root is the proposition that humans constantly seek to understand the world around them, and that the imposition of meaning on the world is a goal in itself, a spur to action, and a site of contestation. Meaning includes moral understandings of right and wrong, cognitive understandings of true and false, perceptual understandings of like and unlike, social understandings of identity and difference, aesthetic understandings of attractive and repulsive,

> and any other understandings that we may choose to identify through our own academic processes (p. 5).

I raised questions about the possibility of alternative world-views and alternative dispensations, and in so doing challenge participants to re-think meanings that sometimes and too often are taken for granted. Within this framework, the discovery of observable and non-observable structures and mechanisms, independent and dependent of the events they generate, is the goal. Knowledge of their real world, by naming and describing the mechanisms they operate in, the world they reside, and the consequences of the events that they observed or partook. MacLeod (1995) shows how meaning-making process emerges as by-product of social interaction and socialization. He argues that meaning-making processes provide a basis for how individuals determine which norms and values to adopt (as cited in Young, 2004, p. 28).

African American Males Experiences in the Community College

Theme 1: Campus Climate - A receptive and nurturing campus encourages student satisfaction.

A series of research questions explored the role that the institution occupies in affecting the engagement experiences of African American males. *Questions such as how would you describe your overall experience at SPC? Do you feel comfortable while on campus? Why, why not? How welcomed and supported do you feel as a student at SPC, and how do you describe your level of connection or engagement within the college?* These questions reveal that participants are engaged by faculty who care, have a compassion for what they do, and accommodate various learning styles. This suggests

that SPC, by way of faculty, directly influence the engagement experiences of students in the classroom. In addition, the findings identified in Theme two and four informs us that SPC can also positively impact students' efforts towards educationally purposeful activities by helping students identify clear educational goals, and assist in the development of an educational plan. Participants described their overall experience at the institution as "positive." Participants also felt so strongly about their educational experiences and felt they made an excellent choice in choosing St. Philip's College (SPC).

Given that, campus climate and institutional environments are often described as one of the most significant challenge for students of color in higher education (McNairy, 1996). Once students are on campus, the campus climate is crucial in determining whether students persist in their studies and graduate (Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Jalomo et al., 1994). However, if students experience a hostile or unsympathetic environment, students are less likely to persist. The influence of campus environments on the educational experience and outcomes of African-American students is a consistent thread in research on students in higher education (Allen, 1985; Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Davis, 1994; Fleming, 1984; Rovai, Gallien, & Wighting, 2005). Of particular importance has been the observed link between perception of campus racial climate and students' academic achievement. Whether deemed a positive or a negative influence, notions of campus climate that include race relations are critical to understanding educational experiences of African- American students.

In an attempt to capture the participants' overall experiences, a number of common responses began to emerge; participants talked about the diversity of the campus

and the support, resources and services to them. Participants described structural and cultural factors and their perceptions about the institution; it became clear why the students feel so positive about their SPC experience.

Through active involvement in academic programs, most of the respondents are connected in one way or another to the institution. Other participants not formally involved in the institution, however, have found their connections, socially. The findings in this study remain consistent with earlier studies that propose that student satisfaction regarding institutional environment is measured by students' feelings that the college is nondiscriminatory, has positive academic diversity, and supports peer group relations (Allen, 1985; Cheatham et al., 1995; Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Davis, 1994; Fleming, 1984; Jalomo et al., 1994; Rovai, et al., 2005). When asked to describe their experience as an African American male community college student, participants' indicated that their overall experiences were positive. The responses ranged from being a "challenging experience" to being one of being "welcomed" "excellent," and "good. Neo stated:

> I can walk down the pavilion or down the hall and people will greet me. I mean, students as well as teachers have a smiling face, warm face. On the other hand, when I was at [San Antonio College] SAC, I didn't have a car. I was catching the bus, my clothes weren't the best, and I felt they were telling me that. It's not like they say[id] anything rude or any racial slurs or anything like that, but it was more like, you can feel like it was more of a stereotype. Even amongst the teachers. Where the college is located here – it is right by Martin Luther King and certain neighborhoods. A lot of people come here [SPC] just for the love of it – they are not students. They are never treated disrespectfully – they are not judged, I've never seen it.

Dozer also felt very comfortable at SPC:

> I felt very welcomed at the welcome center, it is helpful. They welcome you as soon as you walk in – they help you get your questions answered – they direct you to the right place, the right person. I felt good coming back.

Neil also has experienced nothing but positives while on campus. He stated that:

> I think the learning environment is pretty good – most of the instructors are pretty nice and down to earth. I like St. Philip's because of the fact that it allows you to be yourself. Even the instructors – a lot of them are wild and crazy. I just think it is a cool environment because it allows you to be yourself.

According to The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2007), a nurturing environment for black students is helpful in having a positive impact on black student retention rates ("Black Student College Graduation Rates Inch Higher," 2007, p. 60). Creating a welcoming environment, and helping students to feel good about the institution allows them to connect with others and fosters engagement, inside and outside of the classroom. Unquestionably, a positive campus climate is central to enhancing student engagement; however, it does not assure that students will take advantage of the opportunities and services available to them. There is a responsibility from the institution to not only create a welcoming campus environment, but also to ensure that students are fully engaged to take advantage of the many opportunities the college has initiated in response to stakeholders concerns pertaining to retention and completion rates. Community colleges need to be premeditated about directing students' towards purposeful activities and behaviors, even if it means bringing information to the students, as opposed to waiting for them to seek out services, which, according to Theme five, students tend to just rely on themselves to get by.

Almost all of the participants were aware of the opportunities available to them on campus. However, some chose not participate or take advantage of them for various reasons. Some cited their struggle with "courses" or their difficulty in balancing family and work obligations. Nonetheless, there was a sense of knowing on their part about the

existing services and resources available to them. When asked how they spend their time outside of the class, when they are on campus, Dozer stated, "I'm so busy outside of school as far as my son is concern. I work and I am so busy with my family."

When asked about the services and resources the participants have access to on campus, they mentioned everything from the library, the Welcome Center (which includes registration, financial aid, academic counseling, and the Advisor in Residence program (which provides academic support for students), and Educational Support Services (career and tutoring services). Most participants shared their experiences in taking advantage of some of these services and resources, while on the other hand some admitted they do not use these services at all. However, all of the participants were aware of these services and resources the college offers.

Morpheus stated, "They don't see all the services and support mechanisms that are in place that's around and they won't tap into that – they would rather go to their peers and vent and socialize…" Dozer also provided some insight regarding his experience in utilizing campus services:

> Sometimes, with a lot of us, especially, well, black males – African-Americans. A lot of times, depending on what schools we came from, especially being on the east side, we wasn't taught too much so we are kind of behind – not saying that we are stupid ,but we are kind of behind – lacking in something so we need that extra push. Being at St. Philips, they give us a good tutor.

Most students know about programs and services such as the career fairs, information booths, and events student services hold throughout the semester. However, some have indicated that student services can be a challenge sometimes. Switch indicated that:

> When I first walked on campus, the first thing that I initially thought was that it reminded me of high school. As far as the way everything is set up. I was immediately thinking how large it was – "am I going to be lost all the time" – will I figured everything out? "Of course, it's not that big." Then as far as the counselors and my interaction with that, it was good. The first counselor I remembers she was very helpful. Even probably my second experience – but I wanted to register at the beginning of last semester and wanted them to help me register and it seemed like this particular one – was trying not to do it. He would say no, all you have to do is this – I mean you can go home and do it. I asked him if it was possible for him to do it because I was having problems – he said "oh no – you just got to do this and this" – it was kind of as I guess I'll have to go do that myself. But other than that, maybe one before. Everybody else has been super helpful – so nice.

Helping students not only to learn about the availability of college programs and services, but it helps to promote student positive engagement experiences by encouraging students to take advantage of those services and to direct their efforts towards educationally purposeful activities on campus. Participants stated that they perceived the college environment to be open and welcoming, in part, because of the visibility of the programs and services that are available to them. The value in having programs that are visible and available to students is that some participants discover their strength through various interactions within the institution. Sometimes, the general overall feeling is that staff are overwhelmed. It is important to keep in mind that African American students, especially African American males have an overall sense of independence and pride, because African American males are most likely to be disengaged from educational activities on a college campus when compared to similar peer groups. We must embrace and supports these acts of service as tangible expressions of the mission and to recognize and be an advocate for learning and student service.

When some students enter the community college environment, they are immediately welcomed into the college community and introduced to the many resources

that are available to help them succeed. However, others have to make several stops to different campus offices and may meet with staff who [are] too overwhelmed to take the time to explain the process of navigating the college environment (McClenney & Greene, 2005). For the students who are provided with adequate resources from the beginning, they may view the community college environment as a place that is full of opportunity and seek out ways to become involved on campus. On the other hand, students who have less pleasant experiences may still choose to attend the institution, but may not see the college as a place where they can become engaged. In both instances, student support can play a role in maintaining or improving the initial image students have of the community college campus.

Overall, participants for the most part, felt welcomed, supported, and are aware of campus resources, even if some choose not to make use of them; however, community colleges must not be complacent about making students feel welcomed and supported. The next and most challenging step is to make certain that students make the most of the necessary services to be successful. This positive awareness of the campus environment derives from participants feeling that the campus is a diverse environment, and that they have an opportunity to be successful. The focus is on a support network of community college leaders who hold important positions within the institution and convey a sense of accountability to faculty and staff. Colleges need to shift gears and focus on promoting greater student satisfaction, but take a step further by creating greater awareness of opportunities available to them. Thus ensuring students ability to engage in all what a campus has to offer.

Theme 2: Advocate for education – Faculty has an enthusiasm for teaching and learning and are fully engaged in the students well-being.

Because educators are central to the learning process, they can significantly enhance or impede the learning process. More specifically, a teacher's expectations for his or her students will absolutely influence student learning (Harcleroad, 1981). This theme further explores the student experience in the classroom, and the essential role faculty play in creating a spirited and collaborative learning environment, which facilitates advances in the student engagement experience. The majority of scholars talked about instructors who cared about teaching, who can keep students attention, and exhibit energy and enthusiasm into the classroom (Duesterhaus, Mundy, & Caboni, 2002; Linkon, 2005; Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 2003). As participants described their experiences in the classroom, it became evident that students appreciated faculty who truly care about their success. When asked to describe his experience in the classroom, Dozer offered this up: "One of my teachers, Ms. Lewis, she is a real nice individual. She made it very comfortable for me to be back in school. She helped me out a lot and helped me get my mind focused back on school and everything." While this statement presents the details about some of the student engagement with faculty, it does however, address an important issue, particularly within community colleges. There is a push in to reduce institutional cost by decreasing the number of fulltime faculty replacing with part-time faculty, who may not necessarily have an office to conduct business or to hold office hours.

During the past two decades, two-year and four-year colleges have increased their reliance on part-time faculty. For many institutions, hiring part-time faculty began as an

administrative policy that offered a convenient way of meeting the demands for instruction while maintaining cost effectiveness during tight budgetary times (Anthony & Valadez, 2002). It can be argued that hiring part-time faculty now has become a more permanent strategy for colleges and universities—one that has made part-time faculty a substantial group among faculty. Nevertheless, based upon these findings, faculty (full-time or part-time) who are not passionate or caring about what they are teaching and more importantly are not concerned about students' success, will not be very effective and students will be not be as engaged in the learning process. Morpheus stated:

> Sometimes the lecture is like a four-hour class. A lot of times, it is just lecturing so I need some type of interaction or need some physical stimulation just to keep me focused. I just try to make the most of it.

Grubb concluded, college faculty are not, generally speaking, trained in pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment in ways that would enable them to be more effective with their students, particularly with those who are academically under-prepared (as cited in Tinto, 2011, p. 5). Equally important, faculty members who are passionate and engaging can have a tremendous impact on students' experiences in the class and their overall success within the institution (Evans, 2010, para, 5). Most students understand what they need to do to be successful and they take ownership in how they approach their classroom experience. Morpheus would say:

> If I need to interact or if I should be interacting with one person, it would be Mr. Jones. He is a program director for the bio-medical technology program. They have a conference coming and what he does is where I need to be. Biomedical technology is what I want to do after I get some experience. Mr. Jones is the person I should be interacting with in a professional manner.

Faculty that advises students within their specific academic area are knowledgeable about issues related to their discipline and normally provide information

about courses and programs within their department, i.e., the reasons for course and program requirements, and information about educational and career opportunities within their respective fields (King, 1993). Undoubtedly, faculty who exhibit to students they care about teaching, care about students' success, not only in the class, but also in life are effective in fostering positive engagement experiences in the classroom. This authentic care displayed in the classroom may also contribute to a nurturing and a welcoming, open, and supportive campus environment. Educators who avail themselves to students play a key role that inspire students and engage students in an effective way. Demonstrating this availability is also a way for faculty members to show students that they care. Repeatedly, students shared how receiving positive feedback in class from faculty encouraged and motivated them to do well. Each provided examples of how faculty made a difference and positively influenced their experience. Switch captures the spirit of this practice with this example:

> The teachers know their stuff. I noticed I didn't see teachers carrying any writing stuff out of the book, they know. You go to math and they will give you a rule for math out of their head and you should know it. You've got to trust in stuff like that – these people [faculty] know their subject. My sociology teacher a great lady. She was telling us how she wants to do all this and her husband passed away, and she is still super motivated —it's like wow. It is people like that who really do want to make a difference, and not just to be a teacher because of the status quo. That is one thing I like – the teachers are real. It's not like they are just doing this and then go on. They do this and this is what they really want to do. This is how they want to help. That is one thing I like – I mean I haven't had too many teachers – this is only my second semester – they have all been like that so far – they have been really enthusiastic about what they do.

However, one element concerning this theme is that none of the participants went to the faculty office. Those participants, who approach their instructors to ask questions, did so in class. However, scores of faculty teach back-to-back classes and are not

available soon after class, so if a student approaches an instructor after class, the student may not get his question answered and the student may not have time to wait or the faculty posted hours are in a direct conflict with the students work schedule. When asked *how the student described his interactions with faculty, staff, and administrators, inside and outside of the classroom,* Morpheus said:

> Well – I mean outside of class I don't really interact much with the faculty or staff. In class, if I have a question, I'll ask. I can put in participation but once the class is over with, I just go on about my business. I didn't see the need to interact – how would I interact with them – send an email or text or something? If it doesn't have anything to do with homework, then I really don't see the need for it.

Various scholars may interpret this as a scheduling issue, or the instructor not caring about students' success or learning—even a institution disconnect from the lens of the student. However, time is a precious commodity and the 21st century community college student is engaged in activities such as working—sometimes too many hours, family responsibilities, not focused on professional goals necessary to persist in an academic environment, as well as they come without support from family and or friends, or both, and they are unclear on what they wish to do with their lives (Roueche & Roueche, 1994, p. 21). According to O'Banion (1994), many social and demographic forces influence the community college student, the changing faculty, the changing student, and the expanding mission, which has significant implication for teaching and learning (p. 12).

In response to the challenges faced by multitasking students, colleges that are building strong cultures of engagement need to make every effort to make the most of students' available time. By making engagement inescapable, intentionally placing, the experiences that matter most directly in students' paths from the moment they first arrive

on campus, community colleges; give students little choice but to involve themselves deeply in their education. Moreover, although these students may still hesitate to fully trust in their emerging success, they will be rooted securely enough in the educational process that when buffeted by occasional winds of self-doubt and life's myriad other challenges, they will be much less willing to surrender their dreams (McClenney & Greene, 2005).

Theme 3: Commuter Student - Time constraints are real barriers to student engagement.

Student involvement in campus life is an important element in student retention. Being classified as a commuter student— "those students whose place of residence while attending college is not in a campus residence hall, or in a fraternity or sorority house" (Jacoby, 2000, p. 4), leaves less time for academic and a social life and presents a special challenge to students. Students who drive to campus differ in several ways from their peers who live on a college campus. For example, they are more likely to be non-traditional age students, first-generation, and students of color. They also spend more time caring for dependents, engage faculty, take unpaid internships, participate in co-curricular activities, and work more hours off campus, which may also explain in part why they are more likely to be part-time students (Kuh, Gonyea, & Palmer, n.d). According to St. Philip's College (SPC) Office of Planning, Research and Effectiveness (2010) 34% of SPC student were full-time, (66%) were part-time, (35%) were first time in college (FTIC), and (27%) were considered transient students (p. 1). Given these factors, it would not be alarming if commuters – especially those who live a distance

from the college—is less engaged in many aspects of college life. Students that participated in this study could be classified as commuter students. For example,

> Neo I leave, I go to work or do something with my time. Dozer, I will be so busy outside of school – as far as working, with my son, with my family. Morpheus, really – I mean my social life isn't really too much right now. I have a full-time job; [I] go to school. Switch, I don't belong to any groups or clubs or anything. I have many friends in Phi Beta Kappa, but I'm not a part of that and I don't hang out with them here.

Several scholars (Astin, 1984, 1999; Bush & Bush, 2010; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Pascarella &Terenzini, 1977; Pascarella, Salisbury, & Blaich, 2011; and Tinto, 1975), point to the fact that faculty interaction with students both formally and informally correlates with students' ability to persist. Conversely, in their study, Community College Survey of Students Engagement (CCSSE) (2004) found that the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn and persist toward achieving their academic goals (p. 3). Participants whose visible independence to doing everything possible to accomplish their goal are more likely to seek support on campus and are more likely to enhance their engagement experiences, than those participants whose independence and self-reliance and doing things solely on their own.

Consistent with student engagement literature found that purposeful activity such as substantive faculty interactions, and the utilization of institutional resources and support services, enhances student educational outcomes (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, students in this study are the traditional college commuter student. Although Neo, Dozer, Morpheus, and Switch work full-time, at least one of the participants has a child,

and four of the six attend school full-time. My observation is they all exhibit an assured type of understanding relating to their situations as well as having confidence in their ability, and a desire to succeed in college. Nonetheless, student involvement in campus life is an important element in student retention. Conversely, several demographic characteristics emerge that are statistically significant among those who indicate they are "not involved" in campus life.

Dozer shared:

> My experiences [currently] have been good. I actually [attended SPC] back in 2007. In 2007, it was not so good because I was working two jobs – a night and day job, and trying to go to school. It didn't work out the way I wanted it to so I had to drop out.

For Morpheus, work is the largest barrier. He stated:

> Really – I mean my social life isn't really too much right now. I have a full-time job, and go to school. I have a couple of friends – I try to network – I try to stay connected, but as far as my social life, there is really not much to it—just work and school.

College is a transformational experience for many people, commuter students included. Think about it. Students, who live on their own, pay bills, work, family obligations, and then have to drive sometimes twenty or thirty minutes to campus—feel the effects of their many responsibilities. Morpheus offered his thoughts best:

> I think the challenge is probably just myself. I don't want to say discouraged but just sometimes just waking up I say man I got to go to school. I have to fight myself. I want to get complacent and just sit and be in a comfort zone and just be fine where I am right now. I haven't – my job isn't that fabulous, but I have a nice place, I have a running car, and I'm able to take care of my bills and stuff. I just got to get up. I just want more, but sometimes my biggest challenge is me, fighting me sometimes.

In describing their interaction with other students on campus, the majority of the student in the study indicated they speak to students when on campus, and some have

stated they study with other students. However, it is my observation that most in this study are just here to go to class and not engage with other students on campus. For example, the minute a student arrives on campus; it may have struck them that the majority of people they had once considered as friends in high school – were not really friends at all. The reality is that they had spent a lot of time with them only masked the fact that they were really acquaintances in disguise. They see them in class, chat for a few minutes before it begins, say good-bye at the end of the period, and that is it.

Tank stated, "I will engage in conversations with them – I ask them what particular field they are majoring in – [and] what course are they taking – why they decided to take this major – what career goal are they trying to pursue."

Neo shared his level of engagement with students on campus. He stated, "I know a lot of people on campus; I want to say from high school and middle school days. I don't just stay around and stick around and interact. It's a hi and bye type of basis."

Moreover, Dozer reinforced this theme of a commuter student. He said:

> I pretty much just stand around and talk to a lot of my old friends. A lot of my old friends from high school go up here too. I stand around and talk to them, see what is going on. If I'm not talking to them, I go to the library or something and check my email, and catch up on some things.

Clearly, juggling classes, studying, working, driving to class, and dealing with personal responsibilities at home are a central focus in the lives of a commuter student. However, to assume that commuters are a non-reachable part of the student body is a prejudice to the student body, the college, and to the students that are missing the valuable experience of participating in campus life. So the question becomes despite the fact that commuter students typically have more to juggle than students who live on a

college or university campus, what can be done to improve their involvement on campus? Kuh et al., (2001) suggests 15 things to do to learn, redefine, and engage the commuter students on campus:

1. Know the Facts: Check with the college to see if there are any programs designed specifically for commuter students.
2. Create a Welcoming Environment: Work on creating spaces and events geared toward commuter students. Commuter cafes and adequate places to study, lounge, and socialize are great ways to communicate to commuters in their element.
3. Seek input from commuters: Surveys are great but face-to-face conversations go much further when trying to anticipate commuter student's needs.
4. Incorporate Technology: The social media tools are free, utilize Facebook and Twitter where possible to advertise events so commuters can plan in advance to attend.
5. Be Available: Set up office hours and meeting times based on commuter schedules. Speak with Student Life staff and even the Dean of Students, to better understand the peak enrollment and class times for commuters. Remember the more you make yourself available, the more commuters will be persuaded to participate.
6. Get the Word Out: Promote the benefits of joining a group, team, or organization. If the group sounds interesting and appealing, people will join even if it takes more time and dedication.

7. Allow the Family to Join: Commuters commute typically because their family is at home, promote events that are inclusive family events when and where possible.
8. Assist Programs Designed for Commuters: Promote groups to assist commuters in need of transportation, childcare, and education issues.
9. Build Traditions of Inclusion: Ensure events, organizations, and student life work to meet the unique needs of commuter students and other diverse populations on campus.
10. Encourage Students to Be Active: Many times students fail to join groups because they simply do not know how to become more involved.
11. Choose Relevant Programming: If you want commuters to attend, events make sure that the programming is appropriate, worthwhile, and timely.
12. Address Parking Issues: The biggest complaint of commuters is always going to be parking. College attendance is at an all-time high therefore most parking lots are filled to capacity. Work with administration to develop innovative parking and commuting options.
13. Be Respectful: It is often times hard to picture others' situations, particularly when they differ greatly from your own.
14. Ensure Campus Roadways are Properly Marked: Work with campus administration and local authorities to ensure that all signs are updated and all lines and walkways properly marked.

15. Change Your Personal Attitude Toward Commuters: Until you debunk the myths of commuter student's involvement, commuters will continue to have a minimal presence on campus.

These examples encapsulate the fundamental nature of the experience for most of the participants, particularly those who were working, juggling personal responsibilities, and family obligations. The participants shared how the very nature of their life created limited educational opportunities to visit faculty during regular office hours, study with classmates on campus, and to participate in extra-curricular activities. Certainly, this theme cuts across all students' experiences regardless of who had an educational plan and a clear path in which to achieve it. For most of these participants, the responsibilities of life can and do get in the way; which set the stage in limiting the participants' engagement experiences at St. Philip's College. Given the fact that commuters are the least likely group to engage in campus life, it is incumbent for institutional leaders to engage these students in a more productive way. Wilcox and Ebbs concluded, "Community Colleges with their predominately commuter population of all ages and interests, face challenges in building a sense of community." This means that in order to establish a sense of community, institutions must play a special role in creating a positive environment if the student's are to persist (as cited in Moore, 2006, p. 103). To brush off the commuter students is a disservice to the student when the college is attempting to build successful retention efforts, and completion strategies.

Theme 4: Academic Resilience - Having clear educational goals and an identified path in which to achieve it.

The majority of research regarding African-Americans has been from a deficit perspective, principally among males. In the context of academics, the studies that concern African-American males are focused on low enrollment, attrition, and underperformance. Consequently, minimal weight has been placed on the academic and nonacademic factors that contribute to college success. Scholarly literature has centered on the educational success of African Americans from economically disadvantaged households. However, equally important, but absent from the literature, are the experiences of those who have achieved high academic standards regardless of difficult circumstances.

Of the five participants in this study, four are first generation students. However, those students who are first generation appear to have support from a loved-one—and the caveat is that all the participants have an obvious understanding of the importance of college; and what it takes to succeed. Morpheus's keen observation into the significances of succeeding in college and what it will take to get ahead sheds light on the subject, despite the economic and personal struggles African American males face.

Morpheus said:

> Well I'm here because I need to go back to school again. I went to culinary arts and I'm good at it. But it's like everywhere I go, there is just not a demand for cooks and the opportunities are like so limited. I want to get into a career field that is more in demand – more opportunities. A better starting income, a skill that I can use and turn be an entrepreneur and do it myself.

Dozer a 24-year old native San Antonian mostly raised and living in a home with his grandmother. However, his father, mother, brother, and sister were in his life, they

had some issues. His grandmother died and he indicated it was rough growing up. However, he is motivated on making a change in life. Dozer concluded that:

> I am a decent young man. I go to work, I go to school, and I have a son. I am here at St. Philips to pursue a degree in Kinesiology. I am a kinesiology major. Do coaching – coaching in likes physical training or something because I used to be an athlete in high school. I played basketball – that is what I want to do – I want to coach basketball or be involved in it in some way.

Regardless of many critical factors, scores of African-American males have reached a degree of success in educational achievement, indicating that resilience is a part of this group's identification. Researchers have known for years that some of the strengths, resiliencies, and other coping mechanisms associated with academic achievement among African American men enrolled in higher education are related to individual characteristics, social and academic integration, academic preparation, faculty, family, and peer relationship. Neo is determined and motivated.

> I'm very complex – not just what you see at all. Just quiet and reserved. Other things are important as in being successful in life or just having obligations as a man. A lot of stuff that I see people my age do, I don't really participate in. I was incarcerated when I was 16. I was released when I was 20. I'm now 22. While I was in there, my mind frame was because all they had to offer was a GED. The easiest degree was culinary arts, and so, to back my GED up, I wanted an associate's degree. But I'm going for my bachelor's in criminal justice. I'm almost finished with my associate's degree now and [SPC] is the only school offering culinary arts.

Switch is a 23 year old who academic major is Computer Information Systems. He is a very articulate individual who seems to have his act together. He did not seem overconfident, but sure of what he wanted to do.

> I definitely want to get my degree in information systems working in computer networking, and I hope to open a LAN Center. I definitely want to work in the computer field – that is what I do – that is what I love – I build computers – put games on computers. It is definitely to get a degree – someone in the computer maintenance field – preferably the maintenance – not so much the programming

> just yet – but to at least get those degrees. As far as my business plan…as far as that, I'm here at St. Philip's to definitely get a degree. Because it's local, and honestly, I wasn't even going to college – when I graduated. I got lackadaisical for about four years or so – I need somewhere to get started and this definitely would not be too expensive. It's close, it's accredited, it's a good school. My grandfather graduated from here so I figured why not start here, it's the best place to start.

Given the well-noted factors that emphasize the problems of some African American males—social circumstances, cultural norms and discrimination, it has become important to understand the reasons why other African American males succeed, and others do not. In fact, many African-American males who encounter psychosocial stressors such as social isolation, racial discrimination, random acts of stereotypes, violence, economic hardship, and, or structural institutional inequities can have a negative impact on the male psyche; yet they achieve. How then do some African-American men not only survive but also thrive academically in the face of adversity that oftentimes predict otherwise? These men construct adaptive responses, survival strategies, and other methods of working with life's challenges. With all the issues Switch faced, he still has a positive outlook on life and wants to succeed.

> My biggest thing is my father is a drug addict. I love him to death, he loves me to death, he is my best friend. But he is not a great dad. On the other hand, I have a step-dad who is a great provider as far as that goes, but he is not a father. I can't go find him, I can't tell him anything. I think a lot of us [African American men] might be in that same situation. But my mom did what she had to do and I have that to look at. I always said I have to take the best of both worlds from my fathers and put them together to decide what kind of man I want to be. I want to be able to provide for my son, but at the same time, I don't want to lose my sense of me. Like I said, my dad will have fun with me – he'll come out and play basketball or whatever, but my stepdad won't do any of that. My real dad couldn't give me ten dollars if I needed it. My stepdad has all the money in the world. You want to find that balance and you want to take different things in life and learn from things like that. I feel like that maybe that is not the way a lot of black males think or black people in general. That is the way I look at things.

Morpheus:

> I went to school here years ago. When I graduated from high school, I came out with no motivation. The only reason I went to school because my parents told me I was supposed to go. Then, I found myself skipping class, hanging out with people in the student center, or just not being at school. Once I found something I wanted to do, then I got on the ball. I went to Culinary Arts School when I came back, so now I'm at this point This program allows for a lot of potential, a lot of independence. I can already see myself walking across the stage. I'm doing what I gotta do to get to that point again.

The will to succeed far outweigh the challenges that are in front of them. The participants in this study each have an academically sound plan. Each has faced adversity, Neo, spent time in jail. Switch's father had issues with drugs and his grandmother raised him. Dozer has a two-year-old son and works fulltime. Morpheus went to college the first time for all the wrong reasons. The foregoing conclusion shows that when African-American men are at a disadvantage in their life, self-inflicted or otherwise, they show resilience reconstructing their lives despite personal and societal stressful environments, or both.

Theme 5: Circular Relationships: - Social interests and family support influence educational performance.

In general, various studies attempts to explain academic success or failure beginning with three elements, family, teacher, and students. Among the most cited are academic and peer support as well as motivation, which is considered an element that initiates the subject's own involvement in learning? When a student is strongly motivated, his efforts and personality are directed towards the achievement of a specific goal, thus bringing to bear all his or her resources. Stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of the student and requires engaging faculty, family, students, and community

members. These stakeholders can bring to light critical obstacles and resources to the student and help generate solutions to the student success. If not then the silos that often exist among the institution and in the student personal lives, often leave the student with a feeling of loss and disconnectedness.

Students who are first in their families to enroll in college have minimal understanding of the demands that the institution will make or the expectations that it has of its students. The influence of parents and friends, particularly when they are not creating or strengthening interests in college, is tremendous (Roueche & Roueche, 1999, p. 21). Moreover, students' intellectual, social, and personal development is highly influenced by peers or mentors during the college years. When asked to share their experiences on campus, participants covered a myriad of factors. The theme emerged most consistently amongst participants included the importance of having a relationship with a person at the college who could provide guidance, advice, and assistance in navigating the terrain of the institution, and students observations on family and peer support that they felt was important, however, was lacking in their personal domain.

Switch response captured the essences of faculty engaging. He said:

> The biggest thing is the teachers. That is what motivates you. You have so many teachers in one lifetime that stick out, and the ones that you don't forget. My sociology teacher, I will never forget her. She was a nice woman, not just a good teacher, but a good person at the same time. That is one thing that I like.

Tank: The very nature of his demeanor, i.e., reserved, introvert, focused on his life and educational goals: is a focused and determined person.

> I have had the opportunity to meet amazing students and interact with them, and gain friendships from them. I feel very supported and if there is a student that needs help in a course or a project or an assignment, I will take time out on my own and help.

In contrast, Morpheus primarily responded that family was the factor that most contributed to his motivation and success:

> My mom and dad are very well educated, and they helped me. They tried to prepare me probably in my late middle school years. They started talking about what I needed to do. I think it just goes back to just growing up and when you are young you succumb to peer pressure. Your peers have a huge influence on you. I've grown up – I've been a good kid, overall. For some reason, I just wasn't as affected by my peers as much. I see my brother, who grew up in the same house. Grew up in a better household than I did as a kid. And for some strange reason, he just flocks towards the younger people despite the fact that he has a strong family that is willing to do anything for him. That is just a big mystery – like why – why – I can't understand.

He further states, "Dad always told me to do my best in school. I didn't always listen though, but now I'm on it." He would say, "A black man got to do it better, got to do it more."

Dozer found his motivation from an unexpected source.

> My son played a big role in making me want to change my life. He's helped me grow up a little bit. I had to grow up fast. I had the circumstances at home but with him being here, he is keeping me grounded. He has been a big part of me just being positive. At the same time, me just telling myself that I want better, keeps me grounded, trying to make sure that none of this stuff in life ever surfaces again. If it does, I'm able to teach my son right from wrong, and it's just me believing that God has my back and everything is going to work out for the better, regardless of everything else.

Neo also shared his experience, stating, "Really, my mother is a graduate [with] a couple of college degrees. When I go to her house, if I need help, she, and my brothers and sisters are there to help me." Numerous studies (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Hughes, 1987; Pascarella et al., 1986; Wilson and Constantine, 1999) have documented the relative impact of the connection among African American collegians and their families on issues such as psychosocial development, racial identity, academic success,

resilience, and self-esteem (as cited in Bonner & Bailey, 2006, p. 28). Familiar relationships for many African-American students have a particular impact on the development of a positive Black Racial identity. The establishment of a positive identity of African-American male student is significant in that it serves as the foundation upon which the student can develop some sense of agency and in turn determine where he "fits" within the academy (p.28). Moreover, in general, peers are central to emerging adults' lives. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development posits that the major developmental task of the early 20s is to establish close intimate relationships (Erikson, 1963). Given the importance of peers during these years, friends play an important role in the transition and integration into college. As indicated in theme two, students come to class, and then leave. Morpheus was the only student of the six participants indicated that he had support or met after class with any of his fellow classmates. Morpheus shared his story when it came to connecting with his peers at the St. Philip's College:

> I feel most support from my classmates. [We] just bonded, the first day, just helping each other out in class. A lot of them came to me in the beginning because we had a lot of math and engineering notation problems and that I remember from high school very well. I was able to pick up on that and I was able to help them out. We keep- in contact. If we've got questions, we email each other, we call, we text – we do whatever. Then came time and I needed help – we just bonded. Now we go like to a little restaurant sometime after class, I get the most support from them.

Thus, largely shaped by perceivable societal standards regarding male-appropriate behaviors, student is this study did not engage in or felt the need to engage in academics, or sociable activities, unless otherwise required by the instructor.

Theme 6: Race Consciousness - Knowledgeable about racial, ethnic and cultural differences and is no longer intimidated with the reality of race.

Westwood (1990) argues that society has provided "The insistence of 'the male role' against which all men must be measured" (p. 58). Kunjufu (1988) asserts that African American boys must make a choice between school achievement and peer acceptance. Majors et al., (1992) asserts that Black men learned long ago that traditional American virtues of prudence, perseverance, and hard work do not give them the same tangible reward that are afforded to whites (p. 1).

Two questions were put to students in this study. It is interesting to note how each students reflected thoughtfully on their response. At least two of the six students were apprehensive and did not want to "offend" their "brothers'" therefore; I had to reassure them that their names would indeed be change; their identity protected. Four students however, did not need much enticing, except, Tank. As an observer, gaining insight into these young men's consciousness, I must admit, I was not ready and was blown away by their candor, fortitude, and most importantly, their view of the world. As an observer, albeit, much older than the students I encountered, and an African American male, my perception, I also must admit, was jaded, and my perceptions were incorrect of the world in which these young men, deal with day-in-day-out. The first question I posed was *African-American males have the lowest success rate in Texas community colleges compared to any other group – white males, Hispanic males, and Asian males – why do you think so?* Morpheus stated:

> We don't hold [ourselves] accountable. I go back to stuff that my father used to tell me, a black man got to do it better, got to do it more. We are easily content where we are at. We got a nice car, we got some wheels, [and] we are good to go.

> There is nothing more out there. But there is so much more out there, and at some point, it just hits you. I guess for the most part, it doesn't hit black men. A lot has to do with our culture, our music. We are not setting high standards for ourselves because of our role models, or our parents don't instill those values. That if you want to make a better life for yourself, anything great in life comes with a great price. You've got to be willing to take that on if you want to see [the] reward. We don't look [at] that, we just live for the moment, we want the fast money. As far as taking the time to stay and just put forth the effort to get something great in life is just hard. It's just a challenge for us.

> Dozer stated: I think because [with] a lot of black males is just pride and stubbornness. We let our environment get to us and get us down to the point where we don't expect ourselves to do no better than what we are doing at that current time.

Neo was very articulate in his response. I'm not sure if was because he spent time in jail, or being from Chicago, however, his view on this subject was as honest as I had seen from any of the respondents.

> A lot of people my age, minority men are focused on feeling good and looking good. Looking paid instead of being paid. It's like that is what we expect [of] us. The people in our circle I want to say crab in a bucket. It's like that is what we believe or that is what they want me to do or they will point the finger. If somebody is doing something right, I notice, either the next man will compete or they will try to stop you from what you are doing. It's kind of like a hate thing and instead of us doing it together. I don't like what's he's got. I'm either going to try and take it from him or I'm going to try and do it better than him. When it comes to minority men being successful, a lot of them quit. A lot of them quit because it's hard when you are going against, how can I put this nicely, against Anglo American and then your brother who is supposed to be walking with you. You get if from both sides. If we had a potato chip and soda stand, I guarantee someone would try to get over that potato stand or put one up a block down. It's like [Black men] quit or they are [not] satisfied with being ordinary.

Switch point-of-view was a little different. His relationship with his father and stepfather gave him an insight that was in contrast to the other participants.

> I have a step-dad who is a great provider as far as that goes, but he is not a father. I can't go find him, I can't tell him anything. I think a lot of us might be in that same situation. I see a lot of guys who walk around their pants sagging. They are putting on this image of just being hard and like don't anybody mess with me. I think it might come out more to be a popularity contest. Always think back when

> I was younger, they were the cool ones. I think that is probably what a lot of black guys don't get. They see their friends do it and then they want to do it, you know. It becomes a cycle. They are just living in the moment and enjoying life.

Tank felt there was a lack of commitment, financial and family support that inhibits African American men success at a community college, while Neil purported that:

> It could be home or family is not supporting you, or transportation, or they just don't want to do the work – they just want to come here and look at the girls, they're lazy. It wasn't emphasized enough in my house by my mom. My mom never sat down and helped me with my homework and stuff, lack of academic preparation in high school, and just in general, its cultural.

When asked why African American males are not connected/engaged on community college campuses, Neil shared his thoughts:

> Maybe in our culture we just like to try find the easy way out or just try to do less work. I know for one, my brother is one of the laziest people I know. We just like to keep from doing a whole lot of work. We try to do it the easy way. Just like I'm doing – I'm struggling with all this math and science. Do you know how much work I would have to do to get in a position to attend that school over there? Do you know how much work that would be? So I'm going to take the easy way and try to make the same amount of money. I'm going to try and do what I know best, sports. The massage therapy program I don't think is not too engaging. I know it will be a little bit easier for me.

Switch:

> A lot of them can relate to the professors. Even if they are in a group, they might participate more. Still, to me, the way I see it, like even if they are in the classroom with the five people, if a teacher asks a question, one person knows it, and he's saying man I know the answer is 37, and he wants to say it but he's not going to. He's not going to say it because he doesn't want his friends to accuse him of brown nosing. You've got one kid, Bobby, he fit the picture of the typical gangster black guy. This guy was so smart. He came into history class and literally knew everything. No book, no nothing – just knew stuff – super smart kid. But I'm thinking, he didn't seem the type. He was doing his thing. I could see the same person in a group of five people who don't want to learn even though this person is very smart and is very capable of learning and exceeding. But they won't, because if they do make an A or do go to class, they are square or a geek, they are not cool. They are going to put him down…

Morpheus:

> There is a lot of factors – friends, home environment. This comes from every direction and they've been going through this ever since they've grown up. They may not think that there are capable or smart enough to do those things, but maybe they have a lot of distractions. Maybe they made a bad decision that makes it even harder for them to do the things that other people just do. Maybe just having a kid or maybe making mistakes that got them into the system. A lot of time black people, most black people are living on the lower sides of town or the parts of town that are declining. It's a shame that we as I always say, we can't take care of something good. Get something good and we just tear it up. You know, that is just how it is sometimes, generally speaking, I mean…

I wanted Morpheus to elaborate more; I wanted to further explore his meaning on why African American males are not engaged. So I surmised from his earlier response: "So all these factors or some of the things that you mentioned, they bring them on campus and they have to deal with that – but that's called life. From my perspective, that's life."

Morpheus responded:

> At the same time, you get comfortable with these environments but you don't have to be a product of your environments, but they choose to be a product of their environments – that is all they know. They just do what they know and they don't see anything beyond it.

Neo: "Of course, they are not engaged because there is nothing here that they can relate to." Dozer:

> Laziness – just laziness. Hanging around those same friends, not saying they are doing anything bad on campus but that is just the influence. If someone said like don't go do that club or whatever– I guess they are trying to keep their reputation. It's just laziness and reputation.

As a researcher, I wanted to follow up with my initial question to see where it would take me. Therefore, I stated, "Do they not see that the experience of college and

the network and relationships that they build on campus put you into a different type of environment and mindset? Dozer further elaborated:

> That goes back to the environment – they weren't taught that. If you are not taught something like that then you are really not going to act on it. You are going to see it and probably wonder what is it. What does the thing have to offer [me]. If you weren't taught it, then they are not going to jump on it as quick as someone else might. Then you all see it's not who I am or who I'm trying to be?

Table 9 Student Profile

Name	Student Profiles
Neo	22 year old GED recipient; 5th semester; culinary arts major with no transfer educational plan; seeking an AAS degree: currently works 40 hours/week; not involved in campus activities; spent 4 years in jail and a felon; father is a high school graduate and mother is a college graduate; lived with mother during high school
Switch	23 year old high school graduate; 2nd semester: computer information systems major with an educational plan: currently works 30 hours/week: involved in the jazz ensemble group on campus; involved in his church: never married and no children: father and mother is a high school graduate: lived with mother and stepfather during high school: would like to transfer to Texas A&M San Antonio.
Tank	24-year-old 1st semester culinary arts major with no educational plan. Currently do not work and attend SPC full-time: high school graduate: involved in student government and the psych club. Lived with a legal guardian during his high school years: no kids and never married.
Dozer	24-year-old 1st semester kinesiology major with no educational plan. Currently work part-time and attend SPC full-time: high school graduate: not involved in any organizations on campus. First generation student. Parents never attended college, neither any of his siblings. Two year old child and never married.
Morpheus	22-year-old biomedical technology major with clear educational plan. Currently works on average of 33 hours a week and attend SPC full-time: high school graduate and currently have an associate's degree in culinary arts: not involved in any student organizations. Lived with mother and father during his high school years: no kids and never married.
Neil	24-year-old Kinesiology major with focused educational plan. Currently works on average of 30 hours a week and attend SPC full-time: high school graduate: not involved in any student organizations. Lives with mother during his high school years.

Access without success is an empty promise and a missed opportunity with economic consequences. As a result, America is darkened by race, class, socio-economic strata, and more importantly, amongst generations.

St. Philip's College Institutional Initiatives

As an open-entry institution serving at least 35% of first-time-in-college students, (FTIC), SPC has developed a comprehensive system of services. Developed as a tool to

address retention, completion, and transfer rates. The college created the First Year Experience Center (FYEC). The FYEC offers special services and assistance to first year students. The function of the center is to assist in the retention of participating students beyond the first year of college. One-on-one student services and academic support are provided to assist the student to engage in meaningful and purposeful academic activity with the goal of becoming academically successful (Fact Book, 2010, p. 9). Services the FYEC provides are:

- Academic Advising
- Calculator Loan Program
- Textbook Loan Program
- Laptop Loan Program
- Early Alert Program
- Student Newsletter
- Fresh X Summer Program
- New Student Orientation
- Student Seminars

The following is a list and a brief description of programs available to student at SPC:

The Fresh X Summer Program is a 4-week accuplacer refresher course to help incoming graduating seniors raise their accuplacer scores in Math, Reading, and English. This course also offers an orientation to college courses to help incoming students transition from high school to college. Services provided:

- Transitioning from High School to College
- Admissions and Enrollment Process
- Admissions Application
- Financial Aid Application
- Mentoring and Guidance
- College Procedures
- Study Skills
- College Survival Training (p. 9).

The Early Alert Program was designed to provide faculty the opportunity to alert college staff to the student's need for intervention. The earlier college can bring a wide array of support service to bear the more positive the effect will have on the student's overall success, as a result enhancing student's retention, and graduation rates.

The Advisor in Residence Program (AIR) is an additional initiative. It places trained advisors within academic departments with the responsibility of being a front-line contact for students seeking help in scheduling, advising, and identifying support services. The AIR Program has grown to 16 full-time advisors serving more than 2,900 students (unduplicated) per semester. Data suggest student retention and graduation increased because of the positive relationship between the advisor and student contacts. For the departments using AIR, the number of graduates increased dramatically. In 2002–2003 through 2004–2005, the number of associate degrees and certificates awarded increased by 68%. In contrast, the number of graduates in the 10 departments without full-time advisors grew at a rate of 28% (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2005, p. 19. Moreover, to illustrate additionally, enrollment for Spring, 2003, there were 11,040 students; yet, in contrast, student enrollment in Spring, 2007, declined by 10% to 9,944. For the same periods, number of graduates from degree and certificate programs actually increased by 85% from 818 students in 2002-2003 to 1,500 students in 2006-2007 (ACC, n.d., p. 3).

The final program highlighted is the African American Male Initiative **(**AAMI). African American enrollment at SPC in 1987 was 25% to a downward spiral of African American enrollment which of in 2002 was 71% of the total student population. A major

concern, in 2004, under the leadership of Dr. Angie Runnels, SPC assembled a committee to lead the college's effort to address the declining enrollment of male students, particularly African Americans. In addition to leading this effort, Dr. Runnels included this effort in SPC Strategic Plan - Maintain Student Ethnic Diversity. An action plans was developed:

- Action Plan 1: Identify mechanisms to recruit African Americans and especially males. (Through the "Bridges" program and summer programs; articulations with senior HBCU's; enhance and expand recruitment at high schools, etc.)

- Action Plan 2: Develop and provide programs for the retention and success of African American males, such as mentoring, athletic, and other activities that increase student involvement and retention (St. Philip's College [SPC], 2005, para. 2).

The committee goals were to increase African American enrollment to 20% of total student population, as well as to develop a plan to increase African American Male enrollment by 10% - 30%. The efforts included recruitment, retention, and successful completion of the target population (para. 3).

Effectiveness and Outcomes

This section focuses on program strategies and outcomes of the AAMI. From initial response, the African American Males Initiative (AAMI), the Men-on the Move (MoM) program was developed to provide an opportunity for AAM students to participate in a wide range of activities designed to reinforce self-esteem, cultivate leadership, and nurture a sense of community among the participants through interacting engagement, community service, academic accountability, stewardship, and fostering

relationships. Through efforts of the committee, a series of events unfolded to promote the initiative and to recruit students into the program.

In 2005, the AAMI hosted:

- Interest meeting for AAM peer mentors (2-student attended),
- Meeting to share the college efforts related to the strategic plan 2.4, (12-students attended),
- Presentation on the value of education (10-students attended),
- Established a book club (6-students) participated.

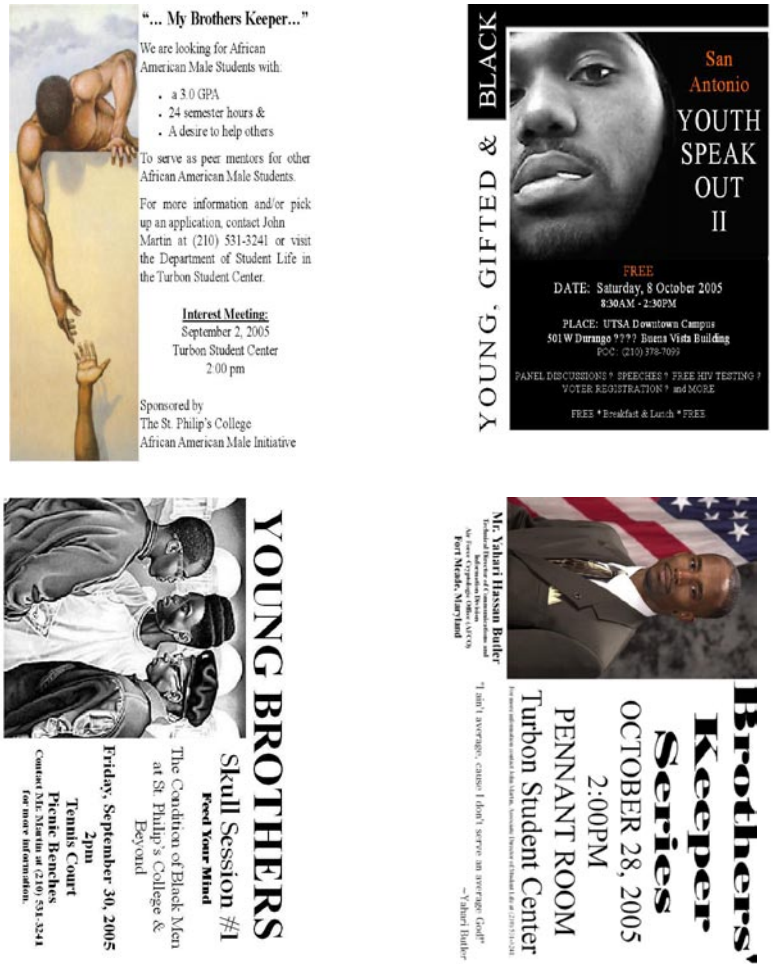

Figure 7 Programs & Activities - Fall 2005: Source: SPC Department of Student Life

By 2010, the program had redesigned its mission and had become part of SPCs strategic initiative, submitting a unit plan to the College. The mission charge:

> The African American Male Initiative is a culturally centered program designed to increase retention and academic success of African American male students. Success is measured by grade point average (GPA), persistence an graduation. The program is a comprehensive effort that will engage the student culturally and socially, provide mentoring; assess students' skills and aptitude; and connect students to the academic resources available on the campus, and the objectives of the African American Male Initiative is to address persistence, 2) success, 3) recruitment, and to 4) participate in the National Dialogue s ("St. Philip's College Unit Review," n.d., para. 1)

The AAMI supports student leadership through the African American Men on the Move student organization. The men organized around common interest and cultural identity, plan, organize, and implement activities for the college. Through their efforts, they were able to host a series of events, 2010-2011 Academic year. Events such as:

- The 5th Annual African American Male Conference: Empowering Men of Color
- Man 2 Man Series - Guest speakers will engage students in a presentation about a contemporary topic themed from a great African American orator from the past
- EMBODI Men of Color Conference
- African American Male Orientation
- Mentor Mentee Mixer

Program vs. Non-Program Effectiveness and Outcomes of African American Males

This section will analyze student in the African American Male Initiative, and student from the general population (non-program) participants as well as students that interviewed for this study. The analysis consists of 25 AAMI students[9] 614 students

[9] Please note the number of African American male students in the AAMI initiative sample size is relatively small. Since the program inception in 2005, SPC Department of Student life provided me a list of 25 total students in the initiative. However, when data was requested from SPC Department of

from general population on average, and six (6) students that were interviewed and are classified as general population students, academic years 2006-2009.

The results of this comparative quantitative analysis of students served by the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) in relation to the general population not served by the AAMI have been notably interesting. In Figure 8, when compared to retention rates for students not supported by the AAMI Fall 2006 to Spring 2007, persistence rates for AAMI students were 100% (2/2) and 64.4% (373/579) in terms of completion of three or more of all classes in which the students were enrolled, in that order. In addition, AAMI students were retained at an average rate of 90% (9/10) for Fall 2007, to Spring 2008, in contrast, non-AAMI African America male students that were retained at an average rate of 63.2% (371/587). Finally, Figure 8 indicates that when AAMs participated in the AAMI, their retention rates are much greater than non-participants are. For academic years 2008-2009, 100% (12/12) of the students were retained when they participated in the AAMI vs. 63.3% (406/641) who did not.

Planning, Research, and Effectiveness, they were only able to produce data on average, nine students, from 2006-2009 academic years.

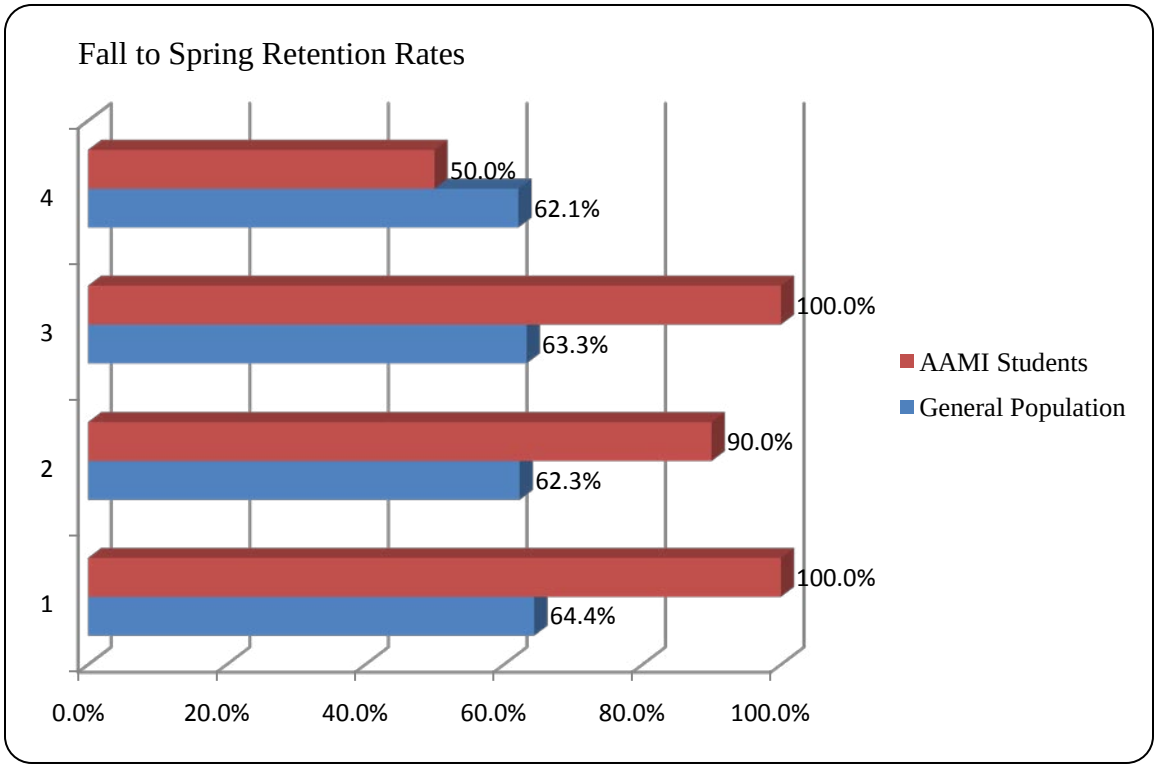

Figure 8 Fall to Spring Retention Rates: Shows the Fall-to-Spring retention rate by African American Male Initiative students vs. non-African American male participants from the general population for academic years 2006-2009. Graphic shows the majority of students that participated in the AAMI had a higher retention rate than non-AAM participants. Data tabulations statistical research specialist and derived from St. Philip's College Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness.

Fall-to-Fall student retention data were also suggestive as indicated in Figure 9 of the strong value of the activities in which AAMI students were involved. AAMI students were retained again on average at rates of 100% (2/2) from Fall 2006, to Spring, 2007, while non-AAMI students retention rate were 40.4% (234/579). AAMI students were also retained at a greater rate from Fall 2007, to Fall, 2008, 60% (10/9) than non-AAMI students 63.2% (371/587) on average. The 34.1% (403/649) retention rate for non-African American male participants vs. the 50.0% (7/12) retention rate for African American Male Initiative participants is less than students who have participated in the AAM. AAMI students who have demonstrated their willingness to engage in activities,

thus, as scholars have clearly documented, students who participate in college activities, have greater college success.

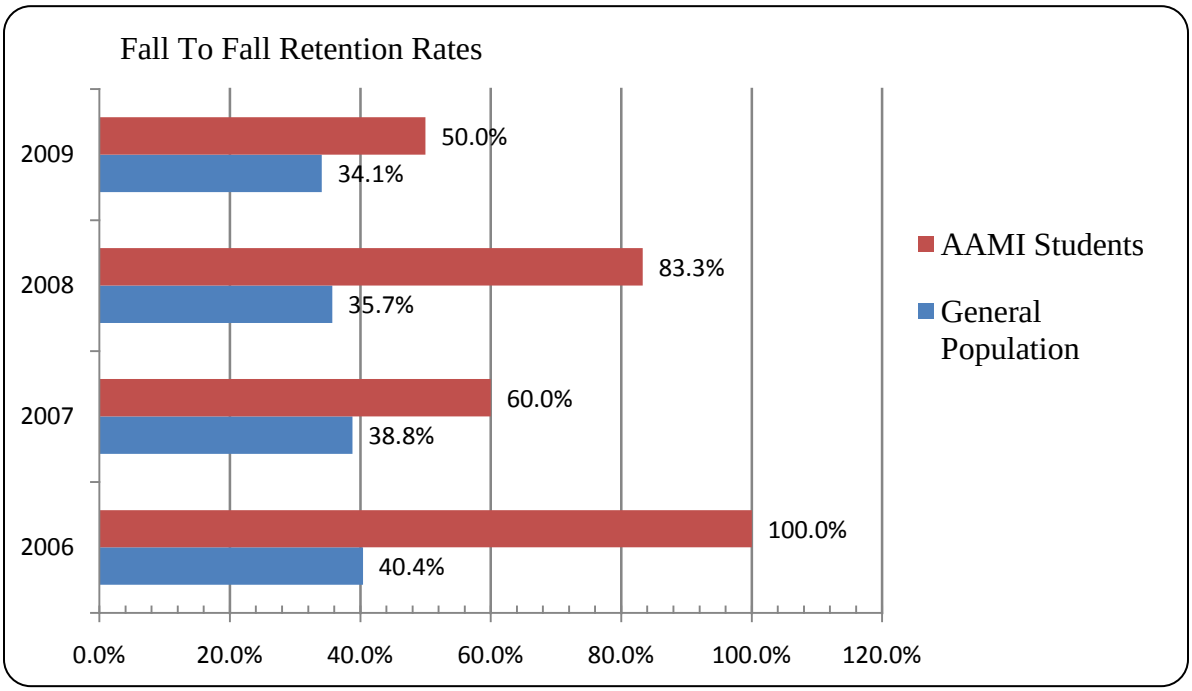

Figure 9 Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates: Shows Fall-to-Fall retention rate by African American Male Initiative students vs. non-African American male participants from the general population for academic years 2006-2009. Graphic shows the majority of students that participated in the AAMI had a higher retention rate than non-AAM participants. Data tabulations statistical research specialist and derived from St. Philip's College Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness.

An a tool to measure student success, grade point average (GPA) is a variable that is used by colleges and universities to determine the student progresses as a measure to determine academic achievement. At most, GPAs as an independent variable of measurement provides little information about the success or inadequacy of an individual's potential (Dye & Reck, 1989). SPC, however, like most colleges and universities use this tools as a measuring instrument.

Data reveals SPC Fall 2006, AAMI students had an overall GPA average of 3.2 (2-students) compared to a 2.3 GPA for non-AAMI students (579-students), as indicated

in Figure 10. Fall 2007 non-AAMI students GPAs were 2.2 (587), compared to 2.9 (2-students) participating in the AAMI. Fall 2008 and 2009 GPAs for AAMI students were 2.2 (12 students) and 2.5(12 students), compared to non-AAMI students GPA average of 2.8 (641 students) and 2.2 (649 students) respectively. Two-thousand eight was the only academic year non-AAMI students outpaced AAMI students based on GPAs. GPAs for study participants for continuously enroll study participants were an average 2.0 based on 29 earned cumulative hour average.

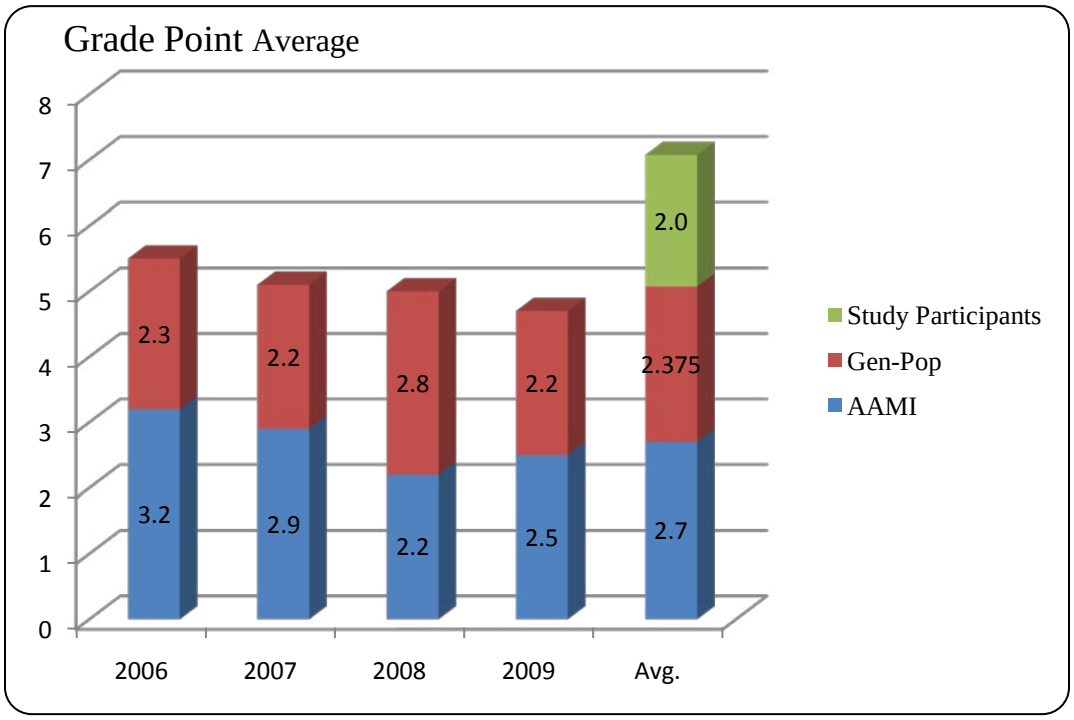

Figure 10 Grade Point Averages: Illustrates Grade Point Averages scores by African American Male Initiative students vs. non-African American male participants from the general population for academic years 2006-2009. Graphic shows the majority of students that participated in the AAMI had a higher GPA than non-AAM participants. Source: St. Philip's College Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness. *The African American Male Initiative group numbers are small, which undermines the statistical significance of the findings. However, almost as important is the potential which rests with the availability of the large number of presently non-participating African American males from the general population.

Table 10 and 11 graduation comparisons are suggestive of the influences of AAMI activities. Comparing 2007-graduation rate between AAMI student enrollment

and non-African American male participants show that non-AAMI African American male students graduate at a lesser rate 12.7% vs. 33.3% for AAMI student participation. Two-thousand eight results are reflective of AAM student participating in AAMI activities and the results reflect that 40% graduate vs. 9.8%. However, when combining 2009 and 2010 academic year, the number of graduates was two or (8.3%) for AAM student participating in the initiative and for non-AAMI African American male students, participation for a combined periods of 2009-2010. Fifty-eight (58) of the 1,153 students graduated in 2009-2010 academic years, which is a graduation rate of 5.03%.

Table 10 African American Male Student Graduates – General Population

Year	Number	Graduates	Percentage of Graduates
2007	588	73	12.4%
2008	574	56	9.8%
2009	588	39	6.6%
2010	565	19	3.4%

Source: St. Philip's College Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness. *The experimental group numbers are small, which undermines the statistical significance of the findings. However, almost as important is the potential which rests with the availability of the large number of presently non-participating African American males.

Table 11 African American Male Initiative Student Graduates

Year	Number	Graduates	Percentage of Graduates
2007	3	1	33.3%
2008	10	4	40.0%
2009	12	1	8.3%
2010	14	1	7.1%

Source: St. Philip's College Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness. *The trial group numbers are small, which undermines the statistical significance of the findings. However, almost as important is the potential which rests with the availability of the large number of presently non-participating African American males.

Students in Study

The students that participated in the study totaled six (6). Their average age is 25, with a grade point average of 2.0 well below the 2.7 and 2.4 GPAs of AAMI students and non-AAMI students from the general population. Five out of the six students have a declared major. Four of the students were first-time-in-college (FTIC), while two were transfer students—Neo and Tank.

Summary

The student voices heard at the beginning of this chapter and multiple research studies suggest that a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) can be a powerful and nurturing learning environment that provide a safe haven from discrimination and value the success of each student. Fleming (1984) found that HBCUs were more effective than predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in cultivating the skills African American students needed to function well in the larger society after college. More studies that are recent have reached similar conclusions that HBCUs offer more supportive and positive learning environments for African American students than PWIs. The results presented above indicate clearly, what African American males at SPC perceive as being important to their academic success. Overall, participants for the most part, felt welcomed, supported, and are aware of campus resources, even if some choose not to utilize them. The participants' discourse regarding the concept of African American male success in a community college ought to give rise to institutional leaders focusing on innovative engagement strategies, building culture of success, and continuously improving its data to reflect accountability, learning, engagement, and relationship building. The ultimate

spirit of SPC rest on promoting greater student satisfaction, by creating opportunities to address the mixed culture that exist in students, faculty, and the community, by responding to greater fluidity in the institution. A more detailed summary and discussion of study results as well as implications and recommendations will follow in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

The push for student success will produce results if the college continually challenges its retention and completion rates, and more importantly, its student-achievement data if graduation and transfer rates are to rise. Like most institutions nationwide, SPC faces challenges from stakeholders across a wide spectrum. And like most community colleges, SPC continues it process improvement strategies to address the lack of evidence-based education[10]. Few studies provide evidence of the effect of educational programs, and strategies on student success, however, other research methodologies—such as correlational studies and case studies—have provided evidence of successful student support strategies (Charles A. Dana Center, 2003, para. 1).

[10] Evidence-based education is more broadly defined than scientifically based research. According to Grover (Russ) Whitehurst, Director of the Institute of Education Sciences (2002), evidence-based education is "the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction." Whitehurst, Grover J. (Russ). (2002). Evidence-based education. PowerPoint presentation available from the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov/offices/ IES/speeches/evidencebase.html.

Chapter Five: Interpretation, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a healthier understanding of the engagement and cultural experiences of African American males at St. Philip's College. This chapter however, will further examine the findings from the previous chapter, compare the research questions and data, and also, scan the findings in relation to existing literature regarding African American males in higher education—especially community colleges, and review the study's foundation based on engagement literature, the role of cultural factors, and theories on identity development. Finally, this chapter introduces implications of findings for community colleges, political or otherwise, and proposes questions for future research.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to compare unengaged African American male perspectives against engaged African American males in a community college. The goal was twofold: first, learn what St. Philip's College (SPC) programs are doing to prepare African American male students to succeed and contribute to their own academic success and second, how SPC engage African American male students in the college. Within this context, the researcher elected to perform a case study of St. Philip's College. A college traditionally focused on improving student success, committed to student access, and to developing the human capital of the college for students and community. To achieve the primary goals, this study first provided an overview of the need to address African American men stagnated or slight increases in higher education participation and

completion from year to year. Second, to report on the development and implementation of the SPCs vision as it has traditionally served students of color. Third, the study examined how SPC's specific African American Male Initiative was used to engage students, and finally, the findings informs policy makers, institutional leaders, and researchers about key factors influencing African American male student success. Taken in concert, this study design was to provide a contextual framework for continuous improvement or redesigning of institutional strategies that focus on improving African American male student academic success. The study was comprised of the following two principal research questions:

Research Question 1: **What impedes African American male's persistence at St. Philip's College?**

Research Question 2: **What institutional programs or practices support African American males' initiatives at St. Philip's College and how successful are those engagements?**

A qualitative research designed case study informed by quantitative data guided this study. The case study was considered the primary methodology, and the use of quantitative data was considered secondary. St. Philip's College served as the unit of analysis for the entire case. Qualitative methods employed included documents, archival records, interviews, and direct observations. The objective of this study was not to represent a sample, but rather to expand on the holistic understanding of St. Philip's College.

Findings in Contrast to Research Questions

St. Philip's College (SPC) center of attention has always been on student success, and has been featured in several state and national publications, as well as President

Loston unwavering rhetoric on the strengths and of the institution's student success agenda as a HBCU, and HIS. Through her discourse, one often hears about the change occurring at the institution. This case study was designed to provide a careful and thoughtful analysis of the institutions' work. The first research question asked, "*What impedes African American male's persistence at St. Philip's College?"* As participants discussed their experiences, it became apparent that most of their engagement experiences were shaped by 1) faculty interest, 2) whether or not they had identified a clear path in which to achieve their educational goals, 3) the challenges they have had to return to school, 4) campus life, and 5) peer engagement. As discussed in the chapter four, because educators are essential to the learning process, the educator can either radically improve or impede the learning process, or both. Most of the participants view the faculty as having a remarkable influence on them. For example Dozer stated, "My teacher made it very comfortable for me to be back in school, and helped me get my mind focused back on school." However, Switch purports that:

> In class, if I have a question, I'll ask. I put in participation but once the class is over, I go on about my business. I don't see the need to interact – how would I interact with them – send an email or text or something? If it doesn't have anything to do with homework, then I really don't see the need for it.

Neo engagement is indicative of African American male students' engagement with faculty. He said, "I don't just go and seek help, at all." Insight into engagement trends and student outcomes on HBCU campuses has not been sufficiently provided in mainstream higher education literature in recent years. Little is known about how HBCU students spend their time and the extent to which they are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities. However, studies consistently suggest that HBCUs

offer a wider array of culturally appealing activities for Black student, which more effectively enhance purposeful activities (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004, p. 272). DeSousa & Kuh, (1996) conclude that Black students at HBCUs devote more effort to academic activities, experience more significant gains in intellectual development and critical thinking, and cultural awareness; and enjoy greater personal and social benefits than Black students at Predominate White Institutions (PWIs) (as cited in Harper et al., 2004).

However, students participating in the study all had clear educational goals with an identified path in which to achieve them were deliberate about their experiences, aware of college resources, and focused on their education, all while juggling their personal lives. Moreover, the students in this study were not as likely to take advantage of college resources, and often sought their own methods to obtain information regarding their education; also, sought social interactions with their peers as a result. Therefore, having, or not having, an identified educational path to achieve their goals does play an important role in shaping the participants' engagement experiences. According to Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) (2009) *Benchmark for Entering Students Only: St. Philip's College*, 39.7% of the students strongly agree, or agree, that an advisor helped them set academic goals and assisted in the creation of a plan for achieving them, while only 28.3% of the student strongly agree, or agree ,that a college staff member talked with them about their commitments outside of school to help figure out how many courses to take (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2009).

Although some participants stated they did not participate in class discussions, most agreed they do not typically ask questions in class, nor do they frequent professor's office hours. Switch, "[If] the teacher asks a question and things are quiet, I'm always the first one to give an answer – maybe I'll take it serious – I'm definitely not like the guy who talks the most in class. I'm a pretty quiet person."

According to CCCSE (2009), 34.2% of "all" SPC students indicated they "never" or only asked questions "once" in class or contribute to class discussions during the first three weeks of class. While 51.6% of the students, "never" or only asked for help "once" from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class during the first three weeks of the students first semester or quarter. Most participants stated they do not have time to visit the instructor during regular posted office due to time constraints, including participation in athletics, social events, or campus activities, while others simply preferred not to spend time engaging with professors when they could spend time with their friends or address family responsibilities or both.

Connecting students with others in academic and social settings is essential to their success and engagement. Tinto (1993) have recognized the profound impact of personal connections in and outside the classroom. Regrettably, the students, who need these connections most often, fail to seek them out. Institutions with a retention culture need proactive strategies and activities and look for opportunities to create meaningful connections. Without personal connections, the conditions necessary to stimulate commitment to an institution and even individual educational goals are fundamentally absent. Without commitment, students are prone to desert their academic pursuits prematurely.

Most would agree that a postsecondary education is correlated with improved employment and earnings, economic growth and productivity, increased civic participation and voting, and intergenerational economic and social mobility. However, many who lack a GED, a high school diploma, or college degree recognize these benefits and wish to pursue postsecondary education. The challenges most of the participants have had endure to return to school is noteworthy, as well as their reasons. Morpheus, "I would say that I am trying to better myself." Neo, "I know where I'm trying to go, and I know what I need to do." Dozer, "Because I have a two-year-old son, and I want him to have better than I did growing up." Neil, "I wanted to do something where I could make a lot of money." Most are unprepared, and some know that something is better out there for them, and college is the answer. However, just attending college, does not make one successful. They have a goal, and an objective. Something they are working toward or to improve upon. Academic goals however, do not only include passing a test or earning a certain grade on a project or in a course. It is a variety of self-related to self-awareness, such as time management, test taking, writing, study habits, and other aspects of academics that guide students along the path of academic success. Students in this study however, did not purport to actively engage in activities that are or related to time-management skills, test taking, or was actively engaged or involved in a writing lab or skill center. Student in this study talked about going to the tutoring center and library. When asked, "Do you [the student] use campus services, most all indicated they have been to both places, however, most conclude like Neil:

> I go in the [library] and use the Internet and to print stuff. I use it if I didn't have a certain book for a class. They let you check it out and I can copy the pages or something. I would use it for that, or if I needed the copy machine. Tank, "I also

> like the campus center, and the way it's – how do I put it – well sized. I also like the library."

Participants also discussed their experiences with asking for support and seeking information. It seems that those students who talked about their need to stay focused on their educational goals were more likely to rely on college resources, instead of themselves, for information. Some participants talked about their social interactions with peers, and how they found those interactions to be non-relevant, and did not detract them from their focus or pursuit of their goals. Some found the peer interaction and engagement positive. If the participants were placed in a group for a project, the participants stated, "this was not a problem and he would do everything possible to make the adjustment and project a success." Another participant talked about meeting up with fellow students at a local restaurant to discuss the class and to fellowship.

A few participants also discussed their financial needs and how the lack of financial support limited their engagement experiences on campus—because they had to work, to pay the bills and limited support from family members, financially. Lastly, the findings suggest that although participants characterize their overall experiences as positive, there were a few examples in which participants shared negative experiences, particularly as it related to the students' perceiving staff and counselors as being unsupportive or not listening to their needs. Dozer:

> From my personal experience, I would say use – you want to do most of the work yourself. You can use a counselor for just a little bit of knowledge but you want to do most of the research yourself. Sometimes a counselor may not know the direction that you need to go. They may be having you take classes that you don't even need. Same thing with an advisor – I've had experiences where I've taken classes that I really don't need. Sometimes – they are just going to give you the general consensus of the classes that you need. I might say I'm a science major – they will assign you a bunch of science classes. Don't go into which particular

> classes you need – oh you're a science major – ok you need chemistry, physics, biology – they just give you a bunch of classes and don't take the time to go into detail about which classes you need.
>
> Neo**,**
>
> I'd just say there has been long lines for registration and financial aid. There will be a line around the corner and two people; I guess the workers will go on break. I guess it is there time for break, but they are seeing how people are coming and it's time to clock out? They will give us popcorn to keep us occupied – but I see it. A lot of people get frustrated.

Overall, the participants' engagement experiences were shaped not by their own efforts to engage within the institution, but by the institution's efforts to be receptive, supportive and caring, which are important ingredients in effectively fostering the engagement experiences of particular students at this institution. Although there is limited literature on the engagement experiences of African American males in a community college, some findings in this study are consistent with much of the literature regarding the factors that enhance the engagement experiences of African American males in higher education; particularly as it relates to factors that impact student success, such as campus climate, commitment to educational goal, and academic engagement. Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) agree that "institutional fit" are important to retaining college students to degree completion, and a positive campus climate mediates undergraduates' academic and social experiences in college (p. viii).

Most of the participants in this study have significant work and family responsibilities, which are common for most community college students. It is no wonder why these participants are not as engaged as other community college students who have the financial means and support from immediate and extended families. Also, consistent with student engagement literature, this study suggests that student engagement is based on students having the available time; it is also concerned with student efforts and a campus environment that encourages student engagement behaviors.

Clearly, the results of this study show the students perceived the institutional environment as being positive and caring, however the institution was in fact not as effective in encouraging student engagement on campus. Student effort are just as important as the effort the institution muster and put forth to provide guidance, structure, and clarity of purpose it the institution wants to foster positive student engagement experiences within the community college setting.

In chapter four, time constraints being one of the challenges students face as they seek balance in campus life and in their personal lives is a concern, not only with African American students, but also with students in general. Community college students—commuter student, in contrast to residential students lack well-defined social structured on campus. Therefore, it is difficult for community college students to establish membership on campus, as community colleges do well to establish "student success initiatives," such as Education Support Services, Enrollment Management, Student Life, Student Financial Services, First Year Experience Center's, Tutoring, Technology Centers, and Advisors in Residence programs. However, commuter students typically, experience conflicts among their obligations to family, work, and college (Tinto, 1993).

According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1998) nearly 30% of 1989–90 beginning students left postsecondary education before the beginning of their second year. Sixteen percent of students enrolled in the 4-year sector left, while 42% of students enrolled in the public 2-year colleges did so (Horn, 1998, p. iii). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students of color, who attend community colleges or four-year commuter institutions, are particularly vulnerable to attrition. Because African American students arrive on campus

academically unprepared coupled with an underscore of negative behaviors and risk factors such as depression, substance abuse, and violence, Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, (1998); Tinto's has identified why students stay on or drop out at school. It is important that institutional leaders make concerted efforts to engage African American students academically, socially, and provide a positive climate and supportive campus environment, all while stressing the importance of coping with the negative experiences African American students feel and to motivate them to persist. Numerous studies have been conducted that examine why students withdraw or persist. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) conclude in their meta-analysis of 16 studies found that students who reside on-campus are more likely than commuter students are to persist in their studies until, graduation. However, there are three broad models of student attrition, but the sociological model of student retention by Tinto is the most cited and influential and is the basis for understanding student departure from higher education. Tinto (1993) concluded that students enter higher education with a history, that is, certain characteristics, expectations, skills, goals, and commitments that are constantly re-evaluated over time in response to their ability to integrate socially and academically into the institution.

For Tinto, students' negative experiences on campus lead to failure of integration and subsequent departure. The key to Tinto's theory is the concepts of academic and social integration and goal commitment that formed the backbone of many studies. Academic performance and staff interactions are viewed as formal and informal indicators of academic integration, whilst extracurricular activities and peer group interactions are formal and informal indicators (respectively) of social integration.

Tinto's theory has enjoyed a high profile however; it has not been without skeptics since the model was first formulated more than two decades ago, explaining retention behavior in higher education. Conversely, Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, (2004) found that the distinctions between residential and commuter institutions indicate a need for separate theories to account for student departure within these institutional types. Tinto (1993) noted that students in commuter institutions have less of a community or social environment with which to develop a sense of membership or belonging. Compared to on-campus students, commuter students displayed more conflicting issues between family, work, and college. In their seminal research conducted in commuter universities and colleges, Braxton et al. found that, of the 13 propositions in Tinto's 1975 theory, only two received strong support, while another two had moderate support. He developed a commuter student conceptual model based on empirically supported propositions. The model of retention Braxton et al used constructed a four base approach: conceptual orientations: economic, organizational, psychological, and sociological (p. 2). Braxton et al. (2004) "multi-theoretical approach explained students' departure as an ill-structured problem, because it defies a single solution and requires a number of possible solutions that may not alleviate the problem" (p. 2). His conceptual model included 16 propositions that relate to these orientations, or to the interaction between the orientations and the following basic elements: student entry characteristics, the external environment, the campus environment, and the academic communities. These components comprise the elements of a theory of commuter student departure.

Moreover, while a great deal of literature exist on student retention models, there is a lack of scholarly research specifically attributed to African American male retention

in higher education. Although retention models explain at risk characteristic of a general nature, and that socially, people in general have to address academic and social deficiencies in order to be successful, economically and personally; most would agree that African American males bring a different set of cultural, economical and personal attributes to the table. According to Orlando Patterson of Harvard University, since the mid-1960s a strong bias against cultural explanation for human behavior has led social scientists and policy analysis to ignore different groups' distinctive cultural attributes in favor of an emphasis on structural factors to account for the behavior and social outcomes of its members (as cited in Wilson, 2009, p. 79). Retention is an important issue for all aspects of post-secondary education, and the retention of African American male commuter students is of particular concern. Clearly, we need a better understanding of why African American male commuters depart college at a higher rate than their peers.

Most literature that examines the retention and persistence of students of color on college campuses from the view of 4-year institutions emphasizing the importance of making connections, in and out of the classroom, and the positive relationship these connections have to overall student success and satisfaction. This literature can apply to two-year College students. This study clearly demonstrates a distinction between social engagement and academic engagement. Although most literature asserts that, the level of student involvement and connections to academic and social systems play a critical role in students' persistence and success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The findings from this study suggest that students can be connected socially, if they choose, but most are connected academically, through faculty, which have been found to have a positive effect on college satisfaction and academic performance for African American students.

Literature suggests that social relationships among peers have a constructive impact on African American male students' persistence, and success. While this may be true at four-year institutions, some of the participants in this study found peer interactions to be non-engaging and intentionally avoided on campus, unless interacting with peers were required in a group project. Other students, who welcomed the social experiences, were also quick to speak about their need to stay focused while pursuing their educational goals. Although social interaction is essential because it leads to feelings of comfort, satisfaction, and provides the student with a level of calm within the institution, it may not translate to purposeful academic progress.

This social surroundings are important since it permits students to stay connected and not secluded from each other and it often creates a safe haven where students can engage in cultural and social engagements, which is often missing at many colleges and universities (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). And "being socially integrated on campus leads to student attachment to the institution, which is linked to a higher likelihood of persistence" (Breneman & Merisotis, 2002, p. 127)

However, this does not mean that this social environment automatically enhances student's academic achievement and success. Nor does it mean that students do not experience negative stereotypes, or an inhospitable atmosphere, which create problems and are often associated with students choosing to drop out of college and go elsewhere. This study suggests that peers, although important components in helping student successfully navigate the campus environment, and in fact, may help student's achieve academic success in a community college environment.

Therefore, the findings are consistent with previous research conducted on African American male community college students, in which studies found that students' perceived their same-group, male peers as being prone to "hanging out", interested in socializing, rather than studying, and generally being unengaged in college, and if he tries to show his intellectual proficiency, he may sense himself losing his own culture, being labeled as sellout or "acting white" (Bush 2004; Fordham et. al., 1986; Major et. al., 1992). This finding is important because it supports the premise that Black men may serve as obstacles to their peers as opposed to serving as a means of academic support (Bush, 2004; Cuyjet, 2006). Although research supports the notion that peer interactions certainly influence student success, persistence, and achievement. However, for African American males, peer interactions can have a positive or a negative impact on their academic progress and based upon the findings from this study, African American men who are focused on their education have a tendency to avoid these social peer interactions at SPC. The second research question, *what institutional programs, or practices support African American males' initiatives at St. Philip's College and how successful are those engagements?* The three programs highlighted in chapter 4 reflect the major initiatives in student recruitment and retention at St. Philip's College. However, one specific initiative, the AAMI at SPC goal is to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation of African American males, it is not without challenge. As recent as May 2011, SPC convened a Men of Color conference in a collaborative partnership with St. Philip's College African American Male Initiative, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Empowering Males to Build Opportunities for Developing Independence (E.M.B.O.D.I.) program and Northeast Lakeview College Minority Male

Initiative. However, emphasis here is placed on AAMI reports from data derived from SPC Office of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness, Student Life—a unit under the Vice President of Student Success, and documents I collected during my investigation. I constructed a framework to explore the undercurrents of African American male educational achievement, to furnish evidence in African American male access and educational engagement initiatives, and to seek evidence of African American male college achievers to reflect on critical moments and key experiences that facilitated their success. Interviews were conducted and quantitative data captured from six non-program specific African American male undergraduates at St. Philip's College to contrast the achievement of AAMI program participants vs. non-program participants. Each student participated in a forty-five minute - to an hour individual interview on this campus.

The results reflective in chapter four indicate those who participated in the African American Male Initiative earned cumulative GPAs average of 2.7 while the students in this study average GAP was 2.0, well below the AAMI participants as well as the general African American male population average of 2.4, for 18-30 year old African American males, academic years 2006-2009. On average, 22.2% of all students graduated from SPC from academic years 2007-2010. However, for the same academic years, only 8.04% of all African American males ages 18-30 graduated. Fall-to-Spring and Fall-to-Fall and retention rates were also reflective on engagement activities for those students who participated in the AAMI vs. students who did not. On average, for academic years 2006-2009, 63% of the non-AAMI program participants persisted from fall-to-spring while 85% of the students' who participated in AAMI activities persisted for the same period. For Fall-to-Fall academic years 2006-2009, 37.3%, of non-AAMI

program participants persisted vs. 73.3%, AAMI students persisted for the same period. Note that the gap between the observed GPAs for AAMI participants, the general population, and students who participated in this study (Figure 10) was larger than the GPAs of the non-program participants, and the general population. The observed persistence rate was also higher for AAMI participants than the general population, although of the six students who participated in this study, two are transfer students; two entered the fall, 2010, and one from 2008. Therefore, retentions rates are not available for students that participated in this study.

However, controlling for other factors, the persistence advantage reflect the fact that differences in the characteristics of African American males who participated in the AAMI and those who did not, cannot be accounted for. No AAMI students were available for interviews at the time of the study. Nonetheless, one can infer, reason being, college persistence varies with age. Spady (1970) concluded that grades are "tangible resources in the career-oriented student in his negotiation for improved opportunities for success" (p. 77). Bowen and Bok (1998) who found that African American students who were most comfortable at their college tended to perform better academically. Leppel (1984) found older students earn higher grades than younger students do and they spend more time studying per course. Older students, being more closely involved in the job world, may have a clearer idea of how completing their degrees will affect their current situation. In addition, salary increase or job promotion may be tied to degree completion. Consequently, students may discount the value of this future benefit at a lower rate than younger students who have a vague notion of the benefits they will receive after graduation. This difference make older students more

inclined to work harder to achieve better grades and to persist in college. Whether the forces increasing older students' chance of college persistence are stronger or weaker than the forces reducing the likelihood of persistence is an empirical question. Moreover, participating in campus activities is one way group cohesion is fostered. Students involved in college-sponsored events are more likely to be successful (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), and this positive association between social and leadership involvement and achievement holds for African American students at PWIs as well (Leppel, 2002). For African American males, campus involvement has a stronger positive effect on graduation rate than for White students and African American females, and contributes twice as much to degree completion than do measures of Academic Integration (Pascarella, 1985). Tinto (1993) points out that the typical campus offers relatively few channels in which African American males feel comfortable getting involved in on campus (whether real or perceived).

Brown (2006) concludes that campus climate, particularly outside the classroom, is often referenced as one of the major reasons institutions struggle to keep African American male students (p. 47). However, this study reflects the higher grade-per-average, higher persistence rates from semester-to-semester and academic years 2006-2009 for students who participated in the AAMI versus students who did not participate. Student shared their insights and it was obvious to me that they feel and believe the campus is a warm and inviting place to be. The major inference to be drawn from this entire set of findings would appear that survival in college is dependent largely in the context of clear and a realistic set of goals, and having interest that are compatible with

the influences and expectations of faculty, and support staff, and most assuredly, the student himself.

Cultural Factors and Racial Identity in African American Male Success

The subject of race in America is as sensitive and contentious as it is important. Highly charged words, such as "fairness," "merit," "achievement," "preference," and even "race" itself, often take on very different connotations depending on the speaker and the context (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Davis 2003; Noguera 2003; Polite and Davis 1999 concluded that across the twentieth century, education discourses have targeted African American males as a special population in need of rescue and protection (as cited in Brown & Kraehe, 2011, p. 74). Plagued with an assortment of social and economic hardships, it is not surprising that African American men in college with respect to engagement, retention, and academic performance by most account face a difficult dilemma. Earls 1991; Gabardine 1999 argue that epidemiologists and psychologists have investigated, described, and identified a number of risk factors within social environments that have multiplying effect on risk behavior of African American men. Growing up poor, in a single parent household; being exposed to substance abuse at a young age; living in a crime ridden neighborhood; lacking access to health care, inadequate nutrition or decent housing; are just some of the variables that are most commonly cited.

Neo**:**

Well, really, I haven't really – I mean I've lived in bad places and I've been around bad places, and this isn't – this isn't anything like that. I've heard of – I guess like people breaking into cars, or a – I've seen people or whatever, I guess, in a gang or what not – that doesn't really bother me because I've been in worse situations.

Neil**:**

She makes poor choices. Her first husband, she was divorced from him in Cleveland. Her second husband, you know, which was my, he made poor choices. He had been locked up in prison and I guess he didn't treat my mom in the best kind of way so she divorced him. She then got married for a third time, my step-dad Ronnie, and he was an alcoholic. I think like my mom has had very poor choices in who she has married. She has been married and divorced three times. Even the fourth time, the guy she went to marry –named Lee from Dallas – he was, of course, was another poor choice for the fourth time and he really wasn't doing a whole lot for her. Even he didn't treat her well so even after all these years, she goes back to him.

Similarly, anthropologists and sociologists have documented the ways in which certain cultural influences lower the aspirations of African American males contributing to their self-destructive behavior. Some suggest, because of the history of discrimination against Black people even those who work hard will never reap rewards equivalent to those earned by whites (Ogbu 1987). While others assert that, the influence of one peers make it difficult for Black men to succeed and excel because their peers “other Black males” may come to think he may too “cool” to be smart (Majors & Billson, 1992). Several researchers have found that for some Black students, doing well in school is perceived as a sign that one has "sold out" or opted to "act white" for the sake of individual gain (Ogbu 1990; Fordham 1996). Moreover, some minority students have been disidentified and might view academics as not self-relevant (Steele, 1997). However, the cool-pose culture is a paradigm that depicts African American males as individuals deeply embedded within a subculture valuing standards of coolness and

hypermasculinity signified by identification with the hip-hop culture—hanging out, urban fashion, and hip-hop music (Majors & Billson, 1992). When asked, *why do African American males have the lowest success rates in Texas community colleges compared to any other group?*

Switch,

> I think if everybody was supporting everyone rather than bringing everyone down, then that would help. I know you've heard that – that a black man is always trying to bring a black man down. It takes a while to know what they mean, but it's true. I think a black person is more apt to help a person of a different race than his fellow black man. Then it comes down to image – I'm not going to help this guy – he could reach up and rob me. If I try to stick my hand out to help this person, and I give him $10.00, he is going to reach into my pocket and take a $100.00.

Tank, "I feel they are not committed to continuing their education." African American males, in subscribing to the values and beliefs constituting a cool pose, dismiss expending effort toward standard academic achievement, e.g., taking challenging academic courses and getting good grades (Majors & Billson, 1992; Osborne, 1997).

Neil**:**

> I figured I could do physical therapy and get a doctorate in physical therapy – go to U.T. Health Science Center, but you have to have the prerequisites and a lot of the prerequisites are the sciences and some math. I had to get away from that just because of the fact that I'm not very good at math and science so instead of struggling in these classes, like with chemistry or physics or algebra and pre-calculus, and struggling and getting D's and C's in these classes when you need A's to go to U.T. Health Science Center, I'd rather just do something that would be easier and use it to my advantage to make the same amount of money that a doctor would.

This posture of coolness is in stark contrast to an achievement ideology; however, it focuses analysis on effort rather than intellectual ability. The reasons underlying a cool pose are based on receiving seemingly greater social and psychosocial rewards from

family and peers, including other male youth both African American and White (Majors & Billson, 1992; Osborn, 1997). These rewards encourage behaviors that devalue academic achievement and depress educational aspirations while condoning activities and relationships that rebuff traditional standards of academic success.

Dozer:

> just hanging around those same friends, not saying they are doing anything bad on campus but that is just the influence – if someone said like don't go do that club or whatever, you know – I guess they are trying to keep their reputation, you know what I mean? I guess its reputation.

Switch, "It may not be the cool thing to do – it's uncool if you don't do it, because everyone else is doing it." Whatever the stereotypical tropes—African American people, specifically [African American] men, [are] intellectually and socially less capable than their White counterparts, servants, sexual supermen, petty thief, unhappy non-White, or mentally inferior, Brown & Kraehe (2011). However, African American males in this study were well aware of their African American identity and those stereotypes that have followed them.

Cultural Responsiveness and Racial Identity

Educational attainment and opportunity often diverge according to the social categories with which the individual and society identify their world and operate, i.e., ethnicity, race, gender, or caste (Buchmann et al., (2001) & Fuligni, 2007). Erikson's (1968) posits that by reconciling the identities imposed upon oneself by one's family and society with one's need to assert control and seek out an identity that brings one satisfaction, feelings of industry, and competence is critical for the development of identity and self. While Helms's Black Racial Identity Theory (1990) described the

degree to which Black individuals overcome negative depictions of their racial group in broader society and association with one's racial group (Helms, 1990). Steele (1995) advances the notion that African American students disengage from academic settings rather than face the prospects of failing and confirming stereotypes about intellectual inferiority or laziness. However, in my observation with students in this study, students understand the racial dynamics and how they are perceived in the world in which they live in. Students identify with the groups they hang out in. They know they lack the necessary skills academically. They understand the "negative depictions of their racial group" as Helms postulates, and the affect of their identity imposed upon them by their family, Erickson. However, in my opinion and observation, they have been able to make some sense of their world and in that; they are able to build or rebuild a new life for themselves. Brown (2009) suggests that Black male students learn how to modify their behaviors when moving across different social contexts (p. 480). In his seminal work '*O' Brotha Where Art Thou?' Examining the Ideological Discourses of African American Male Teachers Working With African American Male Students,* Brown (2009) suggest that African American male students engage in code switching behaviors, learning how to alter or 'back off' from certain aspects of their identity when within different social circles (p480). Therefore, the most fundamental aspect of human social setting is that of meaning that make up a participant's view of reality and with which actions are defined. The role of meaning is of paramount importance in human life and human beings have a natural inclination to understand and make meaning out of their lives and experiences (Krauss, 2005, p. 762).

Change, growth, meaning, and the human condition are central to characterization and stories of African Americans, especially, males. Labels that we stick on people are most often misleading and usually not representative. In simple terms, what "Postmodernist" means is that people look for the real meaning behind the things they do in society or individually and tend to discard the parts that are without foundation. African American males are no different. They struggle to make meaning out of their life, and in doing so, they find the will to survive, and take charge of their lives and find meaning in it. However one frame the will to survive in the context of racial identity, African American males are able to recover from adversity because of their resiliency.

Five of the six African American males in this study were academically successful despite having to overcome struggles and hardships. African American males who developed nurturing, supportive and yet challenging support systems have a greater chance of achieving academic success. Simultaneously, African American males must believe they can take control of their situation despite the challenges to insure their success. By encouraging students to engage in campus activities, peer groups, and campus organizations, community colleges can significantly improve achievement for African American male students. Utilizing learning communities and implementing cohort learning models that link students together for collaborative rather than competitive purposes can have positive results. By learning the importance of group dynamics and collaborative learning experiences, students can begin college with early experiences of personal success as well as success through association, thereby building a culture of success. Students then use the early success as a reference point to build on as they go forward. A culture of success program is one that utilizes a cohort model and

places students into learning communities, which concentrates students around their successful peers, increasing the likelihood for success for everyone.

There was no evidence of internalized racism—at least in the domains of academic achievement and African American male leadership—on the six students interviewed and where data was collected for this study. Though different from the majority of their same-race male peers, the participants' achievements were not deemed abnormal or characteristically White. While there may possibly be limited encouragement for actually attending programs specific to student success initiatives, it is clear that support and validation exist on SPC once African American men enroll. Higher education is not an option for every student in Texas. However, higher education is an important step for students in removing themselves from negative conditions and assisting them to meet their own life goals. For those who wish to make the most of their experiences both inside and outside the classroom, same-race peer support and opportunities for meaningful engagement with other African American students are both possible and likely.

Findings: What Matters for SPC African American Males in College

- They have a high confidence in their academic ability
- They have strong relationships with faculty
- Social integration in the campus community is not a priority
- They possessed a strong "internalized" racial identity, however, it is not a concern
- They have a sense of direction and focus

- They have a heightened self-efficacy
- They have a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities
- They have a deeper academic interest in which they participate

A Recommendation for Further Research

St. Philip's College (SPC) has many initiatives that are under development, improvement, or not fully implemented. This is not unusual for an organization that is going through transformation and multiple change initiatives, and for an organization, which operates under a continuous improvement methodology, using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, as an organizational self-assessment and self-improvement framework to increase efficiency, operate effectively, with the purpose of being held accountable to its stakeholders. Examples of such projects are the organizational re-alignment structure, a new resource allocation process, a student engagement scholarship, lab requirements for all developmental education classes, and a Men of Color program, initiative that is tied directly to its strategic plan.

This study only touched the surface of the engagement experiences of African American males at St. Philip's College. Additional research questions may further be explored that can add to the body of research and to the African American male narrative. First, this study only examined the experiences of selected students from one community college; experiences of African American males from a number of different community colleges may reveal different findings. At this particular institution, student perceived the campus climate as being open and welcoming, where as other community college, the

environments may yield different results. By design, this study ignored a large population of students within the institution. Using a self-selection procedure, in which students volunteered to participate in the study, eliminated the opportunity to understand the engagement experiences of all students who did not choose to volunteer to participate in this study. This group in all probability represents the majority of African American male community college students. Understanding why they remain uninvolved and unengaged within the campus environment may reveal further barriers to success concerning their engagement experience and may further introduce additional strategies that may not have been identified. It would also be interesting to examine the experiences of faculty, staff, and administrators regarding their perceptions and efforts to the engagement experience of African American males inside and outside of the classroom. This institutional perspective would lend itself to assess the effectiveness of some of the implications that are suggested and finalized in earlier studies.

A final possible opportunity exist to further explore the differences between African American males and Hispanic males in St. Philip's College, allowing researchers to understand their interactions, peer interactions and students' experiences in the classroom, possibly having to deal with perceptions and stereotypes as a culture, and ethnic group. The purpose of these future research questions provides additional insight to further understanding the experiences of African American males in a community college setting.

Recommendations for Improving AA Male Success at SPC

The researcher's work clearly indicates that St. Philip's College (SPC) has and is experiencing a transformational change, and with change and innovation comes uncertainty, misunderstanding, and confusion. It is in this sphere that the researcher is providing recommendations to SPC. The first is regarding faculty and staff in its relationship to student engagement efforts, and the second regarding the institutions strategy on student success. It would seem that introducing African American men during the recruitment and orientation process to some of the more positive intervention activities would give these young men the perception that the institution is very interested in their success. Examples might include:

- A more pronounced role of the African American Male Initiative-Men on the Move Program,
- Leverage mentoring relationships and role modeling by creating a mentoring program for African American males,
- Academic enrichment programs targeted at African American male students,
- Increase academic self-efficacy of students,
- Leverage the major sources of self-efficacy,
- Engage business and industry to connect African American males in entrepreneurial activities,
- Facilitate opportunities to increase positive faculty contact,

- Attend to the racial (ethnic) identity development of Black (minority) male (female) students,
- Increase faculty and counseling staff awareness about racial identity Schema,
- Increase opportunities for African American males to have meaningful cross-cultural interactions while supporting their need to retreat to a place of "identity safety" (Steele, 2003, p. 125).

Finally, St. Philip's Colleges can also begin by strengthening their linkages with elementary and secondary schools in inner-city areas, where the greatest minority populations reside. In addition, everyone on campus must take ownership and the responsibility to improve African American male successful outcomes—and not stand on the margins.

Political Implications

> Less than [fifty-years] ago African-American males, in a courageous, proud and militant movement, gained recognition as newly arrived "men" in America. They did so despite decades of societal resistance, often of a violent nature, to recognizing adult African American males as African American men. Still, the African American man presently being recognized by mainstream society is not the African American man who invented the cotton gin; he is not the African American man who pioneered the development of blood transfusions; he is not the African American who performed miracles with the peanut; he is not the African American man who fought tirelessly for civil rights and women's rights in the 1800's; and he is not the Black man who in the late 1960's led Black people on a journey to the "promised land." Instead, the Black man recognized by mainstream society today is fearsome, threatening, unemployed, [and unemployable], irresponsible, potentially dangerous, and generally socially pathological (Majors & Gordon, 1994, p. 11).

The ubiquity and depth of the false conflation between Black identity and danger has several explanations. Frantz Fanon and others have written persuasively

about the way that white cultures use Blacks to symbolize the evil part of them, which then be disowned and placed onto a distant figure (Fanon, 1952). Toni Morrison makes similar points about American literature, in which she analyzes the way that canonical American writers, white writers, use Black characters as foils for (white) American strength (Howarth, 1997, p. 14). He is attempting to devise a set of existential strategies against the overwhelming onslaught of white dehumanization, devaluation, and degradation (West, 1996, p. 88). The search for black space (home), Black place (root), and black face (name) is a fight from the visceral effect of white supremacy. Toni Morrison characterized these efforts as products of a process of dirtying you:

> That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or main you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were at couldn't think it up (p. 88).

According to Clatterbaugh (1997) in a very real and fundamental sense, to be African American and male in America has always been a "sociopolitical issue" (as cited in Fultz & Brown, 2008). From slavery forward, African American men have historically had a troubled relationship where they have resided. They have often faced severe, racially stratified labor markets characterized by unparalleled forms of economic and social marginalization (Fultz & Brown, 2008, p. 857). Consequently, their status as targets of policy regulations has been marked by a sometimes narrow-minded discourse; oftentimes, producing riotous results. According to Vera Paster:

> The African-American male youth . . . is a special object of projection for a white-male-dominated society that focuses on his blackness and his maleness as representations of its disowned self. Irresponsibility, lack of intelligence, unbridled sexuality, dangerous aggression, and other stereotypes thus attributed

> engender anxiety which the dominant society seeks to bind by its elaborate system of isolation, control, humiliation, and punishment of the rejected-self representation, Black males (Majors & Gordon, 1994, p. 105).

Constrained of rigid social constructions—reinforced by continual sanctioned 20th century social and government-sponsored segregationist policy, intolerance, while all condoned by a communities desire to subjugate an entire class of people. W.E. B. Du Bois *Of the Training of Black Men*, Dubois, asserted that "Is not life more than meat, and the body more raiment. And men ask to this day all the more eagerly because of the sinister sign of educational movements" (Du Bois, 1903/2003, p. 71). King (1961)

Crouch (1993) viewed the social construction of Black American and White Americas as a:

> Dilemma of being American and African-American as a non-adaptive cultural construction. Some African Americans acknowledged the persistence of this dilemma, others [saw] it as a muddle of ideas that purport to explicate an alienation between national and racial identity, casting them as warring ideas (as cited in Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003, p. 85).

Prior to and in the aftermath of the Brown v Board of Education decision and in response to the changing demographics of African American life, a variety of educational policy proposals emerged targeting enhanced academic and social outcomes for African American youth. Yet, overall, it took close to three more decades for policymakers to specify African American males as a special focus (Brown et al., 2008). However, despite the benefits of Brown, statistical data reveal that many African American males have not experienced equal educational opportunity (Green, 2008, p. 873). The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the National Commission of Excellence's (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, warned that

public school systems were creating a "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (p. 5). These regulations and policies prohibited recipients of federal funds from engaging in policies and practices that have a racially disparate impact on African American boys and other minority children. However, they failed to close the achievement gaps between African American males and Whites (Glennon, 2002, p. 12).

Public policies have directly influenced the success of African American men and the educational outcome of African American men. Public policies not only shape the conversation about African American men in higher education, but also reshape policies that disproportionately affect them such as criminal justice policies. Despite obvious support from students, faculty, and administrators to identify the lack of success of African American males in higher education, there are critics, as well. The New York Civil Rights Coalition filed a complaint with the U.S. Education Department's office of Civil Rights, accusing CUNY of violating federal laws by creating a separate program for African American men. Michael Meyers, executive director and president of the New York Civil Rights Coalition, filed the complaint, which alleges that "the program discriminates based on race and gender in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments" (Redden, 2009, para. 19) .

The conversation on African American male initiatives across the country and in the public discourse has begun to take shape. The climate across the country is that African American male initiatives are important for various reasons. One being that the lack of a college degree from any racial, ethnic, or gendered group is tied to the economic stability of the US economy and is deemed as a viable threat to the United States global

competitiveness. Another argument to African American male initiatives are the lack of participation of African American males in college, which leaves most racial subgroups—particularly African American males, in a state of generational poverty, poor health; creates a class-based cultural, or destine to a life of incarceration and self degradation. These differentiations have important implications on African American male students.

However, some states are beginning to create legislation that address the disproportionately affects on policies such as in the case of criminal justice policies. Policymakers are gaining greater insight into African American male participation, achievement, and are willing to undergo a paradigm shift in policy formation. Rather than simply reacting to educational deficiencies, such as the lack of progress in African American male participation and degree attainment rates, policy makers would do better to seek insight into the programs and people that contribute to African American male student success, especially for those students who transcend socio-economic barriers (Harper, 2006).

Conclusion

Headlines, *Avoiding the Budget Axe* (Bradley, 2011, p. 6), *Thousands Protest Budget Cuts at California Colleges* (Taxin, 2011, p. 10), *Budget Crunch Doesn't Slow Skyrocketing Texas Enrollment* (Bradley & Barrett, 2011, p. 16), *Shifting Emphasis: Completion Agenda Dominates Even as Colleges Struggle with Enrollment Climb* (Bradley, 2010, p. 6). Colleges are caught in the vortex of a revolution and, ready or not, they are going to have to change. The ride into the future is going to be bumpy. Many

students as well as administrators, staff, and faculty are uncertain about whether they belong in college and are anxious about their abilities to do well. This is the future of community colleges, and especially so for many first-generation students—often children of immigrants and lower-income families. The work of community colleges can no longer be based on their historical mission on access, but rather it must be based on success.

For too many of them, the community college is a terrifying place. Whether it is the best of times or the worst of times for today's community college students, it all depends primarily on how their stories unfold in the days and weeks immediately after they step through the open door" (McClenney & Greene, 2005, p. 2). When some students enter the community college environment, they are immediately welcomed into the fold and are introduced to the many resources that are available to help them succeed. However, others have to make several stops to different campus offices and may meet with staff who are too overwhelmed to take the time to explain the process of navigating the college environment (McClenney et al (2005). No matter how sophisticated the technology, no matter how brilliant the master plan, success in classrooms and advisement offices hinges on the skills and sensitivity of teachers, counselors, and other personnel. Students need to feel welcomed. Student's problematic behavior (lack of attention in class, for example, or failure to turn in assignments) may mask a paralyzing sense of self-doubt, and instructors should attempt intervention before that person fails out. While none of these general points will surprise most educators, the issue underscores just how complex and tricky the teacher-student relationship can be.

This case study has provided the researcher with a robust learning experience that will serve him well in his career in community college leadership. St. Philip's College is a fascinating illustration of how one institution has addressed and upped the ante and moved the bar on improving student success. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote, "We must not forget that most Americans answer all queries regarding the [African American] a priori, and that the least that human courtesy can do is to listen to the evidence" (p. 423).

The researcher believes and continues to believe, that the unique story of the first and oldest African American serving college in San Antonio need be documented and shared with others. Community colleges need to develop interventions that aptly reduce the existing disparities in persistence, and achievement of African American males. To counter effectively to these challenges, community colleges need to better understand the experiences of African American males in order to develop a more effective strategy to augment their educational outcomes and academic success. In short, the strategies they implement and how they support the academic success of African American males in community college environments; thus, helping to close the existing gaps in educational access and attainment for African American males, which will have a profound impact on the group's opportunity to succeed in society. The researcher's only hopes are that his descriptions and analysis have given the story the justice and respect that it so rightly deserves.

Power in the Voice: How Black Males Make Meaning of their Lives

In this study, we have entered into the minds of these men in order to explore their interpretations of power, hierarchy, race, class, social relations, and institutional barriers. Every day the question looms by education practitioners, researchers, and

scholars around African American males whose value and worth seem to be called into question across the U. S. (Howard, 2008). Change, growth, meaning, and the human condition, the subject of this narrative are central to the characterization and stories of African American males. One of the crucial dimensions in understanding how African American men recover from the constraints of poverty, racial discrimination, joblessness, high dropout rates, and higher rates of incarceration, is to make sense of what happened to them. African American males usually find a way to "make sense" of what happened and to make meaning out of these exploitations, stereotypes, discriminatory practices, and barriers in their lives. Yet to emphasize similarities and differences in the men's experiences and the kinds of interpretation offered, meaning-making is a way sociologists pay attention to how society and people within it to read and interpret their world (Young, 2004, p. 134). However, to the outside world, these men represent the underclass. Their accounts reflect an all-too-familiar depiction of poor black men as some of the most disenfranchised and despair-ridden people on the urban landscape (Young, 2004, p. 4). However, despair-ridden, disenfranchised, or disjointed we believe these men to be; they understand their situation, and they have not coward to the doom, gloom, and harshness of their world.

> Neil: My mom is by herself – she is a good woman – she deserves somebody good but she just makes horrible choices when it comes to men – horrible. I told you, my dad passed away when I was only seven, and then she married a guy named Robert, my step-dad. He wasn't all too good a role model. He was an alcoholic – she knew that before she married him. Not having a father figure may have made an influence – I'm sure it did – it had an influence on my life. Then my mom had to work long hours at the post office. She always worked nights. During the day she would come home and rest – she would be tired – she would run errands and be tired so we never really had a chance to hang out. She didn't have the chance to take me to the mall with my friends or do this – you know just

> normal things. I don't know – my mom has always been kind of like a paranoid person. She has always felt like someone was out to get her.
>
> Neo: I've lived in bad places and I've been around bad people. Like people breaking into cars or in a gang. That doesn't really bother me because I've been in worse situations. I'm a felon. I was incarcerated when I was 16. I was released when I was 20. I'm now 22. I want to obtain my bachelor's degree in criminal justice and ROTC, and join the military with the JAG program.

These are the words of black men born into an urban environment, subjugated by the constraints of cultural and structural factors. These are the stories depicted in the narrative of a marginalized man whose story continues to unfold. Although Neil and Neo account of their lives suggest hopelessness, misery, and trouble, they both continue to show signs of resiliency and fortitude. Countless studies have outlined the deleterious social conditions that Black males face in schools and society, and there is little debate over whether these findings are accurate (Brown, in press). However, Young (2004) argues that structural and cultural perspectives deserve equal attention, and that black men have little control over structural factors, racism, classism, employment, education, and incarceration (p.17). However, cultural factors are understood to be alterable by black men themselves, which in turn, is often taken as evidence that these men cause their own plight (p.17). Why have academics had an aversion to cultural explanations? Three fallacies about culture explain the neglect. First is the pervasive idea that cultural explanations innately blame the victim; that they focus on internal behavioral factors and, as such, hold people responsible for their poverty, rather than putting the onus on their deprived environment (Patterson, 2004). Second, it is often assumed cultural explanations are wholly deterministic, leaving no room for human agency. Modern students of culture have long shown that while it partly determines behavior, it also

enables people to change behavior. People use their culture as a frame of reference for understanding their world, and as a resource to do much of what they want. The same cultural patterns frame different kinds of behavior, and by failing to explore culture at any depth, analysts miss a great opportunity to re-frame attitudes in a way that encourages desirable behavior and outcomes (Patterson, 2004). Third, it is often assumed that cultural patterns cannot change. However, Brown (in press) maintains that African American men…[are] not powerless, but possessed cultural adaptations that enabled them to cope within their social reality. MacLeod pays attention to the cultural process of "meaning-making," including how these men frame images of the broader social world (as cited in Young, 2004, p. 28).

> By drawing upon the notion of capital as a product of social experience and a resource for meaning-making, the discussion assists in the development of an improved cultural analysis of black men. This analysis opens up a new perspective on how these men learned to read their immediate social world, and how such readings led them to make choices regarding family, school, and social relations and conditions (p. 100).

The media and print shows the black male as an aggressive person. His "bling-bling, gold and silver laden teeth, and his portrayal of the black female is legendary in the hip-hop movement. As such, young white and Hispanic men, not to mention the Asian, (Japanese) man are trying to emulate him. However, the urban black male receives the label of the disenfranchised and despair-ridden subgroup. Switch and Neo understand this. As Switch would say early in the study concerning the raising of his son, "he did not want his son to grow up to be fatherless"—as he did.

> Switch: – my biggest thing I got to say is like is what they say, you know, cause it's going to carry down from generation to generation. Like me, myself, my father is a drug addict – I love him to death – he loves me to death – he is my best friend, but he is not a great dad. On the other hand, I have a step-dad who is a

> great provider as far as that goes, but he is not a father – I can't go find him – I can't tell him anything. I think a lot of us might be in that same situation. I see a lot of guys who walk around – like my thing is in this situation – I see guys walk around and their pants are sagging – they are putting on this image of just being hard and like don't nobody mess with me.
>
> Neo: I didn't take it disrespectfully – I just know that is life – that is how I took it. I really don't ask for much help anyway. It was just more of people's demeanor over there – you could feel it.

Throughout this study, these men shared their most intimate and personal stories. The men did not blame others for their situation or their troubles. The young men did not emphasize the obstacles and barriers as a deficit—standing in their way of securing personal, economic security or mobility. On the contrary, these men understood where they are with respect to their social and economic mobility. They understand their status in life and the stereotypes associated with being African American male. However, one view the landscape of the "poor" black male, it is important to note that structural deficiencies and institutional barriers are not the only considerations academia and pundits need consider when describing the urban black male. There is much more. I conclude this study with the words of Morpheus because his voice powerfully illustrates the essences of the Black male voice today:

> At some point, you know, something just hits you. Like in my case, I woke up and I was like, I just want more than I have right now. It's a shame that it didn't work out when I got my culinary degree, but that's ok. You can always go back to school. I'm not too much of a studious person, but if that is the route you've got to take, then hey, I'm there. There is always something greater inside a person – it's just a matter of them finding it. It's a great mystery – we don't know – it could take a tragic event – it could take a joyous moment, but there is always that potential and you just can't give up on us – don't give up on us. Don't give up on us – we'll get around to it – it will happen.

Appendix: A

Recruit E-mail/Letter

Dear Sir,

You are invited to participate in a research study called "*The Impact of Educational Initiatives on African American Males at St. Philip's College (SPC): an Evaluation of Retention, Completion, and Student Engagement Efforts*" with Anthony Hancock (doctoral student at UT Austin), because you are an African American male enrolled at St. Philip's College Men on the Move program, or have participated in the African American Male Initiative. I am also inviting male African American St. Philip's College students who have not participated in the program. Up to 50 students will participate.

Participation will entail an audio-recorded interview, completion of a profile form, and collection of your student transcript record. Participation in the study will last approximately 2 hours.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may stop the interview at any time without any consequence to you. Your decision to participate will not impact your relationship with UT Austin or St. Philips College.

Please read the attached consent form attached and contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Anthony Hancock
E-mail: ahancock@alamo.edu
Phone: 210-710-2511

Appendix: B

Informed Consent Document (Men on the Move Participant)

I am writing to invite your participation in a research study about the forces that support or prevent African American male students' success at St. Philip's College. My name is Anthony Hancock and I am conducting this study in conjunction with my doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas, Austin.

You are being asked to join this study because you have participated or are participating in the African American Male Initiative-Men on the Move program at St. Philip's College. Thus, you have a unique perspective that may shed light on this subject. The objective in this study is to draw on your insights, feelings, observations, and experiences to identify common themes and ideas that will support the construction of a theory about factors that support or prevent the success of African-American male students at St. Philip's College.

Specifically, you are being invited to participate in individual interviews that will last no more than two (2) hours. You will also be asked to complete a participant profile form which collects basic demographic information. Before the interview, your permission to audiotape the interview will be sought. After the interview, the data will be transcribed. Then, you will have the chance to correct the transcription. Finally, the audio recording will be erased, and the transcription will only be identified by a code. Only the researcher will know your identity.

During the study, all collected data will be kept in locked file cabinets that only the researcher will have access to.

The potential risks of participation are expected to be minimal and no greater than everyday life. Participants will not directly benefit from participation. The final study may be presented at a conference, workshop or to the general population within the Alamo Colleges for educational purposes.

This study is independent of the Alamo College and St. Philip's College, and your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision at any time not to participate or to withdraw from this study will not affect your current or future relations with St. Philip's College or the Alamo College system. You can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not too answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, or to withdraw at any time without fear of reprisal.

Refreshments will be served during the interview session and you will be reimbursed for the cost of transportation up to the value of a single round-trip VIA bus pass. The reimbursement will be given to you at the conclusion of the interview. If you participate

in the entire interview session, at the conclusion of the session, you will receive a $10.00 Barnes & Noble gift certificate, and you will be eligible to participate in a drawing for an Apple iPod at the conclusion of the study.

Please review important information about your consent and confirm your participation. I will answer any questions you may have about participating in this study. You may reach me at (210) 710-2511 or by writing to me at ahancock@alamo.edu.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX 78713.

Please contact me, by email or phone, upon receipt of this invitation to let me know if you would like to participate in this study or have any question concerning the study. If you agree to participate in the study, please bring this document with your signature. If by any chance you lose or misplace the document, one will be provided to you prior to the interview. You may also sign the form during the interview meeting, if you have any questions you want to discuss in person.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Print Name: _____

Signature of Participant: _____Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____Date: _____

Please bring a copy of this signed form with you. I will also have copies available when we meet.

Appendix: C

Informed Consent Document (Non-Men on the Move Participant)

I am writing to invite your participation in a research study about the forces that support or prevent African American male students' success at St. Philip's College. My name is Anthony Hancock and I am conducting this study in conjunction with my doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas, Austin.

You are being asked to join this study because you are African American Male attending St. Philip's College. You may have a unique perspective that may shed light on this subject. The objective in this study is to draw on your insights, feelings, observations, and experiences to identify common themes and ideas that will support the construction of a theory about factors that support or prevent the success of African-American male students at St. Philip's College.

Specifically, you are being invited to participate in individual interviews that will last no more than two (2) hours. You will also be asked to complete a participant profile form which collects basic demographic information. Before the interview, your permission to audiotape the interview will be sought. After the interview, the data will be transcribed. Then, you will have the chance to correct the transcription. Finally, the audio recording will be erased, and the transcription will only be identified by a code. Only the researcher will know your identity.

During the study, all collected data will be kept in locked file cabinets that only the researcher will have access to.

The potential risks of participation are expected to be minimal and no greater than everyday life. Participants will not directly benefit from participation. The final study may be presented at a conference, workshop or to the general population within the Alamo Colleges for educational purposes.

This study is independent of the Alamo College and St. Philip's College, and your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision at any time not to participate or to withdraw from this study will not affect your current or future relations with St. Philip's College or the Alamo College system. You can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not too answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, or to withdraw at any time without fear of reprisal.

Refreshments will be served during the interview session and you will be reimbursed for the cost of transportation up to the value of a single round-trip VIA bus pass. The reimbursement will be given to you at the conclusion of the interview. If you participate in the entire interview session, at the conclusion of the session, you will receive a $10.00

Barnes & Noble gift certificate, and you will be eligible to participate in a drawing for an Apple iPod at the conclusion of the study.

Please review important information about your consent, and confirm your participation. I will answer any questions you may have about participating in this study. You may reach me at (210) 710-2511 or by writing to me at ahancock@alamo.edu.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX 78713.

Please contact me, by email or phone, upon receipt of this invitation to let me know if you would like to participate in this study or have any question concerning the study. If you agree to participate in the study, please bring this document with your signature. If by any chance you lose or misplace the document, one will be provided to you prior to the interview. You may also sign the form during the interview meeting, if you have any questions you want to discuss in person.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Print Name: _____

Signature of Participant: _____Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Please bring a copy of this signed form with you. I will also have copies available when we meet.

Appendix: D

Interview Questions

1. Who are you? How would you describe yourself to others?
2. Why are you here at SPC? What are your educational goals?
3. How would you describe your overall experience at SPC?
4. How do you describe your interactions with other students on campus?
    a. Follow Up]: Within the classroom?
    b. [Follow Up]: Outside of the classroom?
5. How do you describe your interactions with faculty, staff, and administrators?
    a. [Follow Up]: Within the classroom?
    b. [Follow Up]: Outside of the classroom?
6. How do you spend your time outside of class when you are on campus?
    a. [Follow Up]: What do you believe are the reasons for this?
    b. [Follow Up]: Are any involved in any clubs/organizations/leadership programs/student government?
7. How do you describe your experiences in utilizing campus support services (tutoring/library/advising/counseling)?
8. Do you feel comfortable while on campus at SPC? Why, why not?
9. How do you describe your level of connection or engagement within the college?
10. How welcomed do you feel as a student at SPC?
    a. [Follow Up]: What experiences have you had that makes you feel this way?

11. How supported do you feel as a student at SPC?
    a. [Follow Up]: What experiences have you had that makes you feel this way?
12. What are some of the challenges (if any) you experience as an African American male at SPC?
13. What factors do you feel have been important to your experience at SPC?
14. What could the college do to make your experience better as a student?
15. African American males have the lowest success rates in Texas community colleges compared to any other group, why?
16. African American males are not connected/engaged on community college campuses, why?
17. Is there anything you feel I should have asked you about your experience at SPC?

Sample Interview Protocol – African American Male Initiative- Men on the Move Program

1. How would you describe yourself to others brothers in the Men on the Move program? How would you describe your overall experience in the Men on the Move program?
2. How do you describe your interactions with faculty, staff, and administrators in the Men on the Move program?
3. Describe your experiences in the Men on the Move program?
4. How do you describe your level of connection or engagement in the Men on the Move program?
5. How supported do you feel as a participant in the Men on the Move program?

6. What are some of the challenges (if any) you experience in the Men on the Move program?
7. What do you feel have been important to your experience in the Men on the Move program?
8. What could the Men on the Move program do to make your experience better as a participant?
9. Is there anything you feel I should have asked you about your experience at SPC?

Appendix: E

Participant Profile Form

Please complete the following information, to the best of your knowledge. The purpose of collecting this information may enhance or better identify your experience relating to life and educational expectations, and goals. In addition, the researcher will attempt to determine if there is a correlation between students participating in any academic initiative on campus versus non-participation, which may be relevant to the study. Thank you.

The participant profile will only be identified by a code developed by the researcher from a master key file that contains the participant's real name and pseudonym or code name. Only the researcher will know your identity.

STUDENT ID# _____ Date _____
Name _____ Age _____
Phone Number _____ Email Address _____
High School Graduate or GED
Educational Goal (Please circle all that apply):
Transfer (where :_____) AA/AS Degree Certificate Not sure
Academic Major _____ Number of units completed _____
Number of semesters you have been at SPC_____ SPC cumulative GPA _____
Do you work Yes or No?
Number of hours you work per week_____

Please list your involvement in any college program, organization, or club (such as athletics, student club, student government, or academic team):

_____
_____
_____
_____

Marital status (Circle one)

a. Married
b. Widowed
c. Divorced
d. Separated
e. Never married

How many children do you have?

Age(s) _____ _____ _____ _____
1st child 2nd 3rd 4th

Your place of birth: _____ _____ _____
City State Country

Hometown (city and state where you have spent most of your life)

_____ _____
City State

Excluding any non-adult siblings, with whom did you live during your high school years? (Circle all that apply)

a. Mother and Father
b. Mother and Stepfather
c. Father and Stepmother
d. Mother only
e. Father only
f. Other relative - specify: _____

What is the highest level of education earned by your parents? (Circle one for each parent.)

Level of Education	Father	Mother
a. Don't know	a	a
b. 8th grade or less	b	b
c. Some high school	c	c
d. High school graduate	d	d
e. Some college	e	e
f. College graduate	f	f
g. Attended graduate or professional school	g	g
h. Attained Master's	h	h
i. Attained LL.B., J.D.	i	i
j. Attained M.D., D.D.S. or equivalent	j	j
k. Attained Ed. D.	k	k
l. Attained Ph.D.	l	l
m. Attained Technical or some other degree		
i. specify	m_____	m_____

Students, did anyone advise you on the selection of your major?

a. No
b. Yes. If yes, who? (Circle all that apply.)
   i. Mother
   ii. Father
   iii. High school teacher
   iv. College professor
   v. Sibling(s)
   vi. Friend(s)

Other - specify: _____

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Vita

Anthony Hancock served in multiple roles at a very large community college for the past 12 years. He currently serves under Special Projects for St. Philips College. Mr. Hancock developed his passion for community college leadership as a student and ultimately a graduate of an Alamo College institution. Dr. Hancock has worked in various areas of higher education, including planning and research, marketing, and student and community outreach. He also has experience in the K-12 arena, as well as faculty positions at the community college level.

Special initiatives: Anthony has chaired or been involved with including the South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute, a group facilitator for the U.S. Department of Education, Tech Prep Programs; Committee Liaison for Administrative Searches at the AC, District-wide Leadership Development Strategic Priority Committee, and Committee Liaison for the Chancellor's Transformational Leadership Team for District Performance Review and Strategic Priority.

Anthony earned an A.A.S. in Public Administration from San Antonio College, and an earned Bachelors' degree in Public Administration from Our Lady of the Lake University, and a dual M.A. in Public Administration, and Computer Resource and Information Management from Webster University. Dr. Hancock currently graduated from the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin, earning a Ph.D. in Education Administration.